

ARE YOU LIVING YOUR MISSION STATEMENT? | SHOULD WE DO AWAY WITH TEACHER TENURE?

OCTOBER 2012  
Volume 199  
No. 10

# American School

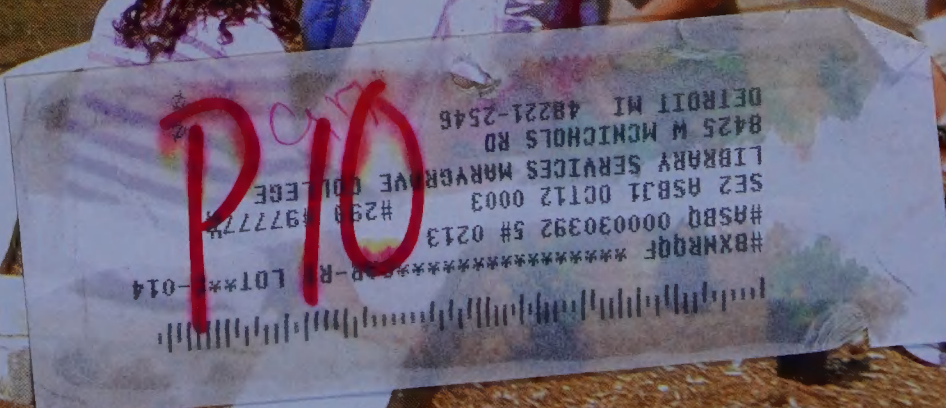
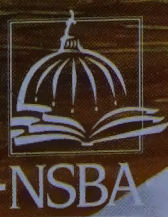
AMERICAN SCHOOL BOARD JOURNAL - THE SOURCE FOR SCHOOL LEADERS



# Building a Bond

**As worries about the economy continue, school boards are getting creative when asking voters to approve bond issues for construction and renovation**

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October 2012

Volume 199, No. 10

Established 1891

# American School

THE SOURCE FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

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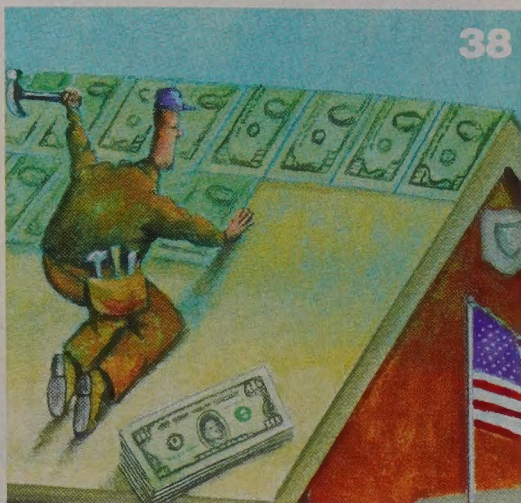
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Opinions expressed by this magazine or its authors do not necessarily reflect positions of the National School Boards Association.

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Ward Melville High School  
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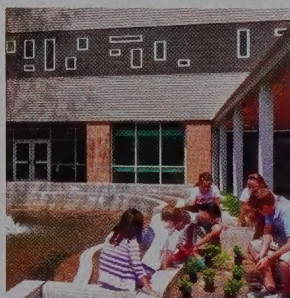
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# FROM THE EDITOR

Building a Lasting Bond



**G**iven the sluggish economy, it's not a giant leap to think that asking voters to support school construction bonds is a bad idea.

But, as Senior Editor Del Stover discovered in reporting this month's cover story, that's not necessarily the case.

As Del notes in "Building a Bond," a surprising number of districts are persuading voters to support proposals in financially strapped states such as California. The way they're doing it is by refining their strategies and telling their stories well.

When dealing with skeptical, money-conscious voters, clearly understanding public opinion can help districts avoid crucial missteps that can lead to bond defeats. If anything, districts must explain their plans to anyone who will listen, and then step back and listen to what voters have to say.

"Voters have been surprisingly supportive of bonds," says Judy Marks, director of the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities. "But school officials also are making the case for why they have to do it ... and school districts have to go out and sell their bond issues."

But once the sale is complete, your job is not done, as Communications columnist Nora Carr notes in this month's article, "An Ongoing Campaign." Districts must build on the voters' trust, or face losing it.

"Keeping everyone informed about what was promised, what was voted on, and how the money is being spent

is not simple," she writes. "Memory is famously unreliable, which means that even ardent and active supporters may have very different ideas about priorities, budgets, design specifications, proposed school locations, and other details."

As longtime readers know, Nora is an expert at helping district leaders tell their stories. That's one reason it was such a pleasure for me to collaborate with her on a new NSBA publication, the 28-page *Telling Your Story: A Communications Guide for School Boards*.

This new guide includes seven chapters—each with discussion points—that focus on how you can better communicate and engage with various constituencies, set the record straight about your work, build a network of supporters, work with the district's communications department, and develop an elevator speech.

Having worked on the book with Nora off and on for several months, I can tell you that the end result is well worth your time and attention. Several state school boards associations have already purchased copies, National Affiliate school districts have access to the publication, and individuals can purchase it through the NSBA bookstore for \$10.

I hope you enjoy it, and that you enjoy this month's issue. Until next month ...

Glenn Cook,  
Publisher and Executive Editor



# American School

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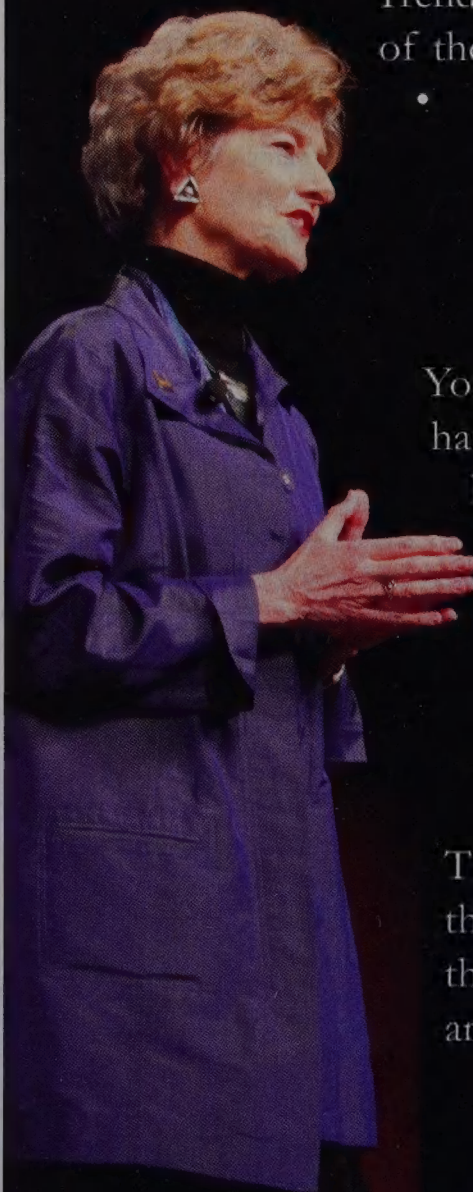
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# We thank you Anne L. Bryant

For 16 Years of Superb Service,

Including

- The founding of the Center for Public Education
- The establishment of the Key Work of School Boards
- Earning the 2005 Association Trends Association Executive of the Year Award
- Establishing NSBA as the leading voice of advocacy for local governance of public education.



Your wisdom and leadership  
has brought NSBA to new  
heights and we will always  
cherish your contribu-  
tions. You have made a  
difference for the  
schoolchildren of  
America.

Thanks for  
the memories,  
the leadership,  
and the legacy.





## ON THE HILL

# A look at the presidential candidates and their education platforms

Michael A. Resnick

**T**hroughout this election season, President Obama and Mitt Romney are campaigning on their visions for moving our nation forward. The United States faces long-term economic challenges as technology reshapes the workplace and other nations compete by growing their skilled workforce and consumer markets to attract businesses to locate within their borders.

School boards and the public need to know how the candidates will use the federal role to help educate our children for successful careers and lives in the future that lies ahead. As a non-incumbent, Romney's plan for education is presented in a campaign white paper that understandably lacks operational detail. Obama's policy direction is more specific as it is based on concrete proposals and executive decisions made over the past four years.

In many respects the candidates' platforms are similar, but they differ in key

areas. Obama and Romney both support high state academic standards, rigorous assessments, and using student test scores, including annual growth, for school accountability and to gauge teacher effectiveness. Both support using the federal role to promote innovation and leverage change, including expanding the establishment of charter schools, channeling a greater portion of federal education funds into school reform strategies, rewarding good teachers, and promoting alternate routes to teaching.

Their differences are significant, however. First, Romney would diminish the federal footprint by deregulating programs and eliminating the Department of Education by folding the function under another agency. Federal funding would not increase, and money for reform strategies would be shifted away from formula programs, like Title I, that he believes are ineffective.

Romney sees coupling support for private sector options with increased parent decision-making as key to improving America's education. He supports vouchers, including allowing Title I and disabled students to have federal funds follow them if they transfer to another school district, a private school where permitted by state law, a charter school, or use funds for tutoring or a digital course. By requir-

ing districts to provide clearer information about individual school performance, parents can determine which choice is best for their child. Romney also favors English language immersion over bilingual education.

On the subject of unions, Romney charges that they impede reform and insulate teachers from accountability. He would like to see teacher tenure eliminated or reformed and ineffective teachers removed, but does not specify how the federal role would be used for that purpose.

Regarding funding, Romney is not specific on the bottom-line or specific programs. However, he has expressed general support for the budget plan advanced by his running mate, Paul Ryan. If that plan were applied to education, it would result in a 19 percent cut (5.4 percent in 2013 and 13.6 percent in 2014), according to White House estimates.

Obama envisions a more aggressive role for the federal government, as exemplified by his Race to the Top program and the conditions states had to meet to qualify for No Child Left Behind waivers. Overall, he wants schools to improve by having high college and career-ready standards, more effective teachers, and principals, as well as strategies for turning around low-performing schools.

The president's programs have established detailed criteria, priorities, and implementation requirements for states and school districts. Obama has opposed vouchers, but did support this year's appropriations to expand the program in Washington, D.C. He believes in the value of pre-school programs and supports competitive grants to elevate state program standards and professional instruction.

In the funding area, Obama's record comes into play. He supported substantial funding for education through the 2009 stimulus program, which provided some \$100 billion of funding over





## YOUR TURN: YOU SAY

### Title IX brought huge changes for girls and women

Just look at the Olympics, one school board member wrote. From 17-year-old boxer Claressa Shields, who won a Gold Medal for herself and her hometown of Flint, Mich., to the victorious women's soccer, gymnastics, and beach volleyball teams, the London Games were dramatic proof that Title IX, the 40-year-old law promising equality in sports and academics, has had a tremendous impact.

More than 70 percent of you said Title IX has had a huge impact on the opportunities available to women and girls; the rest said it has had some impact.

Some comments:

■ Though it's often overlooked, misinterpreted, or otherwise misused, Title IX has still had a huge impact.

—Patricia Blochowiak, board member, Ohio

■ I would say it had a definite positive impact, however there are still areas where girls are not well represented, i.e.; science, math and engineering.

—Mark Gilbert, board member, New York

■ I was in high school when schools were first required to provide equal access to athletic opportunities. By the time I had finished college and was teaching in my own classroom, schools and attitudes toward opportunities for girls had completely changed. I watched that first batch of female athletes

walk out of school knowing that they could go anywhere and do anything that they set their minds to accomplish. Now these former students are the parents (and sometimes grandparents) of the students I serve today. All you need to do is have a five-minute conversation with any of them and you will know that being recognized as equals in the area of athletics has made all the difference in their lives and in today's society.

—Randal Braun, superintendent, Wisconsin

■ Clearly one of the best pieces of legislation passed by Congress in days when they could actually get things done!

—Fred Wachtmeister Jr., board member, New York

two years on top of the regular appropriations, and followed that with a \$10 billion school jobs program in 2010. Subsequently he sought \$25 billion for school construction and \$30 billion for hiring teachers and first responders, but Congress did not pass those measures. His funding proposals for ongoing programs have been relatively flat, with program increases being targeted to competitive grant programs to advance his reform agenda.

As to the unions, the president seeks collaboration between the teacher organizations and school districts to develop student achievement strategies. This includes contract and school personnel policies that tie academic goals with program innovations and teacher recruitment, assignment, evaluation, professional development, promotion, and removal. Incentives for engaging in that collaboration are included as conditions for receiving certain grants, including requiring the teachers unions to sign-off or be a co-applicant with the school board.

In sum, both Obama and Romney would continue a federal role that promotes rigorous standards, assessments, accountability, innovations and strategies to increase teacher effectiveness. By comparison, Romney favors less federal regulation, fewer dollars, and increased reliance on the private sector to provide alternatives to public education. Obama favors a broader scope of the federal role with more direction from Washington, D.C., and more funding, while opposing a nationally-based private school voucher program.

To find out more about what the candidates plan to offer over the next four years to advance American education, see the National School Board Action Center at [www.nsbac.org](http://www.nsbac.org). ■

Michael A. Resnick ([mresnick@nsba.org](mailto:mresnick@nsba.org)) is NSBA's associate executive director for federal advocacy and public policy. His column appears monthly in *ASBJ*.

## YOUR TURN: WE ASK

### What do you think about teacher tenure?

Want to get rid of bad teachers and upgrade the profession? Here's a simple solution: Eliminate teacher tenure.

That may be the accepted wisdom in some circles, but Craig Waddell, an eighth-grade math teacher and adjunct professor at the University of Missouri, isn't buying it. In his article on page 25, he argues that eliminating tenure won't solve the problems that ail the teaching profession and would just make matters worse.

"When tenure is removed, teachers have little incentive in an individual school or district and perpetually risk termination based on an administrator's whims and foibles," Waddell writes. "Why would highly qualified, competent teachers bet their professional career on the chance that they could significantly improve the state of a low-performing school?"

Waddell believes that, rather than eliminating tenure, schools should identify why they have underperforming teachers—reasons such as deficient teacher education programs, a shortage in some fields like math and science, or a high turnover rate—and work on systematically solving those problems.

What do you think? As always, choose a response from those listed below, add your comments, and email them to [your-turn@asbj.com](mailto:your-turn@asbj.com). We'll report the results in December.

- A. Don't mess with teacher tenure. The problems in K-12 education lie elsewhere.
- B. Teacher tenure is a big problem and needs to be eliminated or at least sharply curtailed.
- C. Reforms are necessary, but the concept of teacher tenure is basically sound.
- D. None of the above.

**About the Your Turn survey:** These responses represent the views of the *ASBJ* Reader Panel, a self-selected sample of subscribers, plus other readers who choose to participate by postal mail, email, or online at [www.asbj.com](http://www.asbj.com). The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of *American School Board Journal* or of its publisher, the National School Boards Association. **Join the panel at [www.asbj.com/readerpanel](http://www.asbj.com/readerpanel).**



# Talk About It

Our monthly topics worth discussing



Faced with high unemployment and foreclosure rates, the Osceola School District community in Kissimmee, Fla., needed a boost. The school district's joint event with the district's education foundation and the county's chamber of commerce earned Osceola a 2012 Magna Award in the over 20,000 enrollment category.

The Back-to-School/Back-to-Business Community Expo welcomes back the district's employees, parents, and students to the new school year. It combines three events—a district employee expo, a chamber of commerce expo for the community, and a backpack giveaway event.

Last year, more than 2,500 backpacks were given away to needy students, hundreds of shots and physicals were done by the Osceola County Health Department, and parents were given the opportunity to find bus routes and apply for free and reduced-price meals for their children.

The education foundation collected about \$19,000 from booth fees and sponsorships to help fund additional programs for children and teachers.

For more information, contact Melba Luciano, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, at [lucianom@osceola.k12.fl.us](mailto:lucianom@osceola.k12.fl.us). The district's website is at [www.osceola.k12.fl.us](http://www.osceola.k12.fl.us).

Want to see your district honored as a Magna Award winner? Nominations for the 2013 Magna Awards are open at [www.asbj.com/magna](http://www.asbj.com/magna). All winning districts will be featured in an upcoming issue of *ASBJ* and will be honored at a luncheon at NSBA's annual conference in San Diego in April 2013. Cash prizes are awarded to the three grand prize winners.

## African immigrants sending children back home to be schooled

Some African immigrant parents, while pleased with U.S. business opportunities, are less pleased with U.S. public schools, and according to the *Washington Post*, they are paying as much as \$6,000 per child per year, plus travel and living expenses, to send their children back home to Africa for schooling. The *Post* said these immigrants are not happy with expensive American child care, a public school system they view as lax (Nigerian children begin kindergarten as young as 3 years old), and the sense of entitlement that they feel American students project and that results from living in a privileged country.

## Year-round falling out of favor

Some school districts that have tried year-round schools—Salt Lake City and Las Vegas are two examples—have not seen the gains in student achievement they expected and are returning to traditional calendars. *The Christian Science Monitor* reported that Salt Lake City returned to a traditional calendar when data showed that students in traditional schools were outperforming those in year-round schools.

## Big district enrollment declining

Over the past five years, enrollment in almost half of America's largest school districts has steadily declined, resulting in school closings, layoffs, and curriculum reductions in schools that provide services to America's most needy students. Increasingly, the students remaining in these districts are English language learners, live in poverty, or have physical or learning disabilities. *The New York Times* reported that enrollment declines in these districts result from many factors, including the poor economy, the housing crisis—which has forced some families into foreclosure and senior homeowners to

remain in the homes in which they raised their families—the crackdown on illegal aliens in large districts in California and Arizona, and the rise of charter schools.

## Florida district bans energy drinks

Florida's Manatee County School Board has voted unanimously to ban energy drinks from the district's schools. The school board made the decision after middle and high school administrators said the drinks were a problem and adversely affecting student behavior and performance, WTSP.com reported. Each energy drink contains the same amount of caffeine (200 milligrams) a student would receive from drinking three cups of coffee, 14 teaspoons of sugar, and 200 calories. The ban will take effect this school year. The board has placed energy drinks in the same category as cigarettes, alcohol, and illegal drugs.

## D.C. public school students paid to attend summer school

*The Washington Examiner* reported that this summer, the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) paid 305 low-achieving students \$5.25 for each hour they spent in the "Summer Bridge" program. The program is designed to assist rising ninth-graders identified by the district as less likely than cohorts to graduate from high school on time. Ninety-five other students who signed up for the "Summer Bridge" program voluntarily only received half of an elective credit. To fill the 400-student session, 305 students who had been flagged by DCPS and had signed up for the Summer Youth Employment Program were given their attendance at the "Summer Bridge" program as their summer job. Workplace simulations—such as showing ways to use math skills to solve problems if the students were executives at a sports television network—were part of the program. ■





# TAKE THE LEAP

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- ★ **Learn** about the latest federal legislative and legal decisions
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- ★ **See** the latest technology to bring back to your district

Attend with your leadership team to make the **LEAP** to better learning and empower students to achieve.

Both registration and housing open on October 17, 2012.



[www.NSBA.org/conference](http://www.NSBA.org/conference)



# Q&A with tech-savvy superintendent Matt Akin

In the rural Alabama district of Piedmont City Schools, something extraordinary is happening. Instead of letting a depressed local economy define its future, the school system charted a new path for its students by implementing the state's first one-to-one laptop initiative in 2010. While it's been a community-wide effort, Superintendent Matt Akin is without a doubt the driving force behind the district's expansion and integration of technology into the classroom.

Named to the NSBA Technology Leadership Network's 2012 "20 to Watch" list, Akin has long understood the power of technology to transform teaching and learning, and indeed, public education itself. What else would you expect from someone who began his K-12 career as a computer science teacher? Senior Editor Naomi Dillon talked to Akin about mPower, computer nerds, and the possibilities and limitations of technology.

## You've had a long history in education technology. Tell me about that journey.

When I was a kid, I guess I was a nerd. Growing up in the 1980s, I had an old TRS-80 computer. My uncle had given me an introduction to computer programming book, so I was learning this stuff when I was 13. I received my undergraduate degree in math, but when I interviewed [for a teaching position], they needed someone who could teach Advanced Placement computer science. So I went back to that old computer programming textbook to help me. I learned early on the power of computers and technology. I felt like I was teaching kids to think logically, which would help them in their other classes. Then I became a technology coordinator and remained

so for several years even after becoming superintendent, so I always had a focus on technology.

## How has your perspective on education technology changed?

It seems like for a lot of years, technology in education just let us do our administrative tasks better. We could average grades quicker, have kids take tests on computers, and teach them Microsoft Word. But after three or four years of this, it became harder to look at yourself and honestly answer whether we were really impacting the lives of kids. Our approach now is totally different. Everything we do is about how we change teaching and learning.

## Talk about your district's mPower initiative.

It is a school system initiative, but it's more than that. We're in a small town in the south, where all of the jobs revolved around textiles—and as they started being exported, so did our labor market. We really felt like we were in a dying community, so mPower was a way to revive the community.

## How does it work?

A lot of planning goes into it. It would be typical to spend a year planning, but I felt we didn't have a year, because that would be another senior class that would do without. We have a school system where 65 percent of the students are on free and reduced-price lunch, and I knew from experience the impact technology could have. It was not only a way to level the playing field for these kids, but also change the outlook they had of the school system and



the city. At my house, and in a lot of houses, my kids know there is an expectation to go to college, but in other households, there is not that same expectation, so it was about changing those internal expectations. Aside from that, we also had to make sure we had the infra-

structure in place to accommodate the technology and, most importantly, the faculty buy-in.

## Putting a laptop in the hands of every middle and high school student and teacher is obviously one of Piedmont's signature programs. Are there others?

One of things most exciting about mPower is that it has brought about the air of innovation at our schools. Last year, for example, I had a physics teacher approach me and ask if he could teach physics by teaching survival skills. And just this summer, volunteer teachers developed online classes that 300 eligible students signed up for and participated in. It was an opportunity for teachers to teach classes they always wanted to and get some professional development and for kids to learn about things they wouldn't have during the school year, like the study of insects and snakes.

## What are the possibilities and limitations of technology in education?

Technology can be the great equalizer and give opportunities to all kids, rich or poor, no matter what speed they learn at and how they learn. But you can't do it without a teacher. You have to have teachers who are willing to change their approach to teaching and to use new tools. ■



# If You Purchased Municipal Derivative Transactions from January 1, 1992 to August 18, 2011

## You Could Get a Payment for a Class Action Settlement.

A proposed Settlement has been reached with Wachovia Bank, now called Wells Fargo, defendants in a class action lawsuit that alleges price-fixing in the sale of municipal derivatives transactions by Wells Fargo and other companies. The case, *In re Municipal Derivatives Antitrust Litigation*, MDL No. 1950, No. 08-02516, is pending in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York.

### Who Is Included in the Settlement?

This Settlement includes all state, local and municipal government entities, independent government agencies and private entities that purchased:

- (1) Municipal derivative transactions through negotiation, competitive bidding or auction, directly from any Alleged Provider Defendant or Co-Conspirator or brokered by any Alleged Broker Defendant or Co-Conspirator,
- (2) Any time from January 1, 1992 through August 18, 2011 in the United States and its territories or for delivery in the United States and its territories.

The Defendants and Co-Conspirators are listed in the detailed notice available on the Settlement website.

### What Does the Settlement Provide?

Wells Fargo will pay \$37 million as follows: \$20 million has already been paid into an escrow account and the remaining \$17 million will be paid later. This Settlement is only a partial settlement of the lawsuit because it only affects the claims against Wells Fargo. The lawsuit is continuing against other Defendants. Morgan Stanley has already settled. Wells Fargo will cooperate with the Class Representatives in the litigation that will continue against the other Defendants.

### What Do I Do Now?

- **Remain in the Settlement.** To remain in the Settlement Class and participate in the Settlement, you do not have to do anything now. If the Court approves the Settlement, you give up the right to sue Wells Fargo for the claims in this lawsuit and you are eligible to receive a payment. Claim forms are not available now. Register on the Settlement website to receive a claim form when it becomes available. If you remain in the Settlement Class, you still have the right to exclude yourself from any other Settlements reached in this lawsuit.

- **Exclude yourself from the Settlement.** If you do not want to remain in the Settlement Class, you must exclude yourself. You must send a written request for exclusion by first-class mail, **postmarked no later than October 19, 2012** to the Settlement Administrator. If you exclude yourself, you cannot participate in the Settlement, but you retain your right to sue Wells Fargo on your own for the claims in this lawsuit.
- **Object or Comment on the Settlement.** If you remain in the Settlement Class and want to object to or comment on the Wells Fargo Settlement or any part of it, you must file an objection with the Court and deliver a copy to Class Counsel and Wells Fargo **no later than October 9, 2012**.

### When Will the Court Decide Whether to Approve the Settlement?

The Court has scheduled a hearing on December 14, 2012, at 2:00 p.m. at the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, United States Courthouse, 500 Pearl Street, New York, NY 10007, to consider whether to finally approve the Wells Fargo Settlement as fair, reasonable and adequate, whether to approve Class Counsel's request for reimbursement of litigation expenses, and to consider any objections.

The Court has appointed the law firms of Hausfeld LLP; Boies, Schiller & Flexner LLP; and Susman Godfrey L.L.P. to serve as Class Counsel and represent all Class Members. If you want to be represented by your own lawyer, you may hire one at your own expense. You or your lawyer may ask to appear and speak at the hearing but are not required to. If you want to be heard by the Court, you must file a written notice of your intention to appear with the Court and deliver a copy to the Class Counsel and Wells Fargo **no later than October 9, 2012**. The Court may change the time and date of the hearing. Any change will be posted on the Settlement website.

### Get More Information

For more information on this lawsuit, your rights, or to obtain a list of defendants, call or visit the Settlement website listed below or write to Municipal Derivatives Settlement, c/o Rust Consulting, Inc., PO Box 2500, Faribault, MN 55021-9500.



Del Stover

# Building a Bond

**As school construction needs grow, districts must refine their strategies and plans before going to voters**

**T**he economy is in the doldrums, unemployment is high, and people are worried if they'll still have a job tomorrow. So it should come as no surprise that voters are wary when school officials ask them to approve a bond issue and the taxes to fund it.

This summer, for example, California's Jurupa Unified School District asked for a \$125 million bond—and saw its request go down in defeat. At least eight other districts in the state also saw their bond measures fail.

But to the surprise of many, these defeats were in the minority. An impressive three out of four bond proposals in the Golden State—25 out of 34—have won approval so far in 2012. The state economy may be weak, and California may be the birthplace of Proposition 13 and the modern anti-tax movement, but state voters are showing surprising support for school bond issues.

That support, however is provisional, say school finance experts. Officials cannot overreach in the funding they request, and they have to make a powerful argument for the taxpayer's sacrifice. In today's tough economic times, voters need not only to be wooed but won over—and that's no easy task.

"Voters have been surprisingly supportive of bonds," says Judy Marks, director of the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities. "But school officials also are making

the case for why they have to do it ... and school districts have to go out and sell their bond issues."

## A tough sell

That should come as no surprise to veteran school leaders. An old maxim in public education is that any campaign for a bond issue—even in the best of times—must begin years before school leaders even think to ask voters for money. Public confidence in the schools, support for the district leadership's vision, and agreement on the need for a costly facilities investment must be carefully cultivated for bond votes to succeed.

All that's changed today is the less-welcoming political environment for such requests. Voters aren't keen to shoulder a greater tax burden these days, and any building plan will receive even greater scrutiny and debate over every dollar spent. That has convinced more than a few districts to simply shelve any building plans until the future.

Even communities with a history of overwhelming support for school funding are finding tough times. With a string of ballot victories over the past two decades, officials with Oregon's Portland Public Schools were dismayed to see last year's \$548 million referendum defeated by complaints over its price tag and a lack of details on how money would be spent.

Portland officials went back to the drawing board and recruited a wider cadre of community members, including







bond issue opponents, to re-examine the district's facility needs and develop a new plan, says Robb Cowie, executive director of community involvement and public affairs. Dozens of public meetings made clear that citizens didn't feel like they owned the bond package and didn't agree with the rationale behind the plan's hefty price tag.

"It was really important to listen, particularly in the wake of a defeat of a ballot measure," he says. "These listening sessions really were helpful in building a sense of trust for the board and superintendent to sit down and have honest conversations with those on both sides of the fence."

In the end, a much broader consensus was reached for a targeted investment in the district's aging infrastructure, which includes many buildings that are more than 50 years old, Cowie says. There was far greater agreement for narrowing spending to updating the high schools, making safety renovations, broadening handicapped access, and modernizing middle school science labs.

"All of this creates the conditions for greater success the next time around," says Cowie, referring to a scaled-down \$482 million bond proposal that's under consideration this fall. "We'll see in November, but certainly we're already seeing greater ... energy in support of this proposal."

Clearly understanding public opinion can help districts avoid a false start like Portland's, experts say. School leaders

The schools featured in this cover package are 2012 Learning By Design prize winners ([www.learningbydesign.biz](http://www.learningbydesign.biz)). Twice yearly, Learning by Design features engaging and enriching learning environments and the firms and design teams that create them.

Far left: Box Elder School District in Brigham City, Utah, narrowly passed a bond that allocated \$56 million for two new high schools. Center and top right: A new fine arts center and adjoining cafeteria that converts into a lobby for events were two focal pieces of Wayland High School's bond initiatives in Wayland, Mich. Bottom right: Ned E. Williams Elementary School library in Longview, Texas, was the result of a historic bond election that completely rebuilt the district.

cannot make decisions solely on what's popular, but there's real danger in bucking public opinion—or trusting that persuasion will sway money-conscious voters to change their views. Last year, Michigan's Galesburg-Augusta Community Schools attempted to change public opinion rather than align its plans with voter thinking, and the result was a decisive defeat for its \$11.1 million referendum.

School officials understood the dangers. A professional survey found solid support for a referendum that didn't raise taxes, but only a third of voters supported the district's plans for a combined junior-senior high school. The eventual bond proposal did not raise taxes—instead extending the tax rate that paid off a previous bond issue—but voters still "felt that was not the right thing to do," says Superintendent Tim Vagts.



"We tried to sell it. We didn't. We were not able to convince people. Our community believes we already have the facilities to educate our children, and they weren't willing to ... support our concept."

The lesson in Galesburg, Vagts says, is that school leaders and the community must share a common vision about the district's needs. And that lesson has been learned. Rather than rush a revised bond proposal before voters and hope for the best, he says, "We want to take a bit of time and work with people to establish that community vision ... and then we'll go forward from there."

## Community vision

These school officials did not ignore the strategies needed to push through a bond issue. But their failures underscore today's realities: In a struggling economy, school officials need to go the extra mile—and perhaps even farther—to persuade taxpayers to invest.

Districts need a long-range facility plan—a vision for the future preferably developed with extensive community engagement—says Molly McGee Hewitt, executive director of the California Association of School Business Officials. There also needs to be "a sense of urgency" that a bond issue in tough economic times is the right decision.

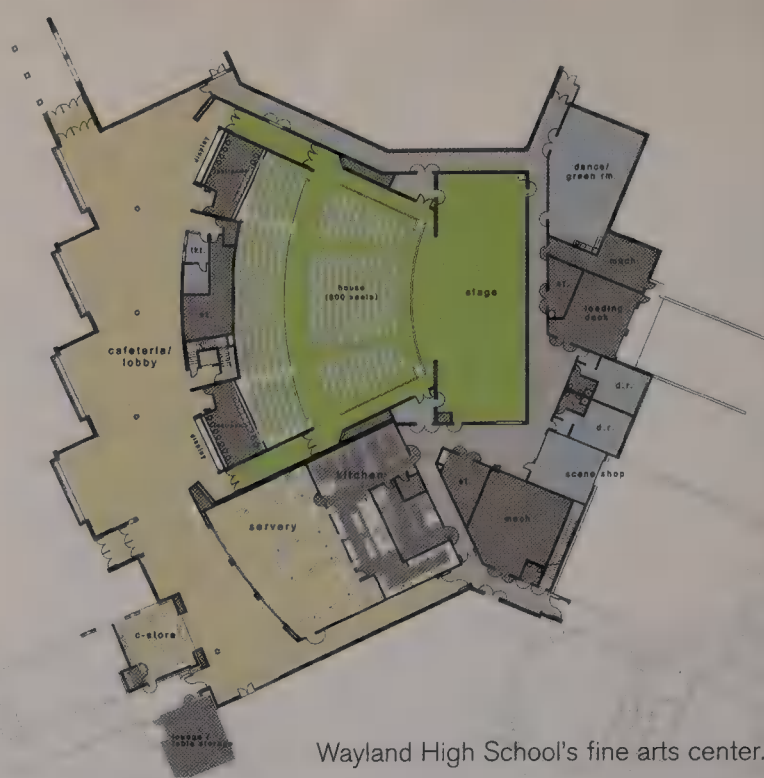
"Where school officials have success, they will give a convincing story and show empirical data to show why they are doing what they are doing," she says.

That can be done in many ways. Some districts open schools for tours to show voters the damage from roof leaks or the poor condition of science labs. Others distribute campaign brochures to show maintenance and fuel cost savings from replacing half-century-old boilers. In Ohio, the Huber Heights City Schools distributed a video of its school conditions.

"We were struggling with how to get the community to look inside the buildings," says William Kirby, who recently retired as superintendent. "When they drive by, they see these well-maintained buildings, but now that we wanted their support in replacing those buildings, we had the video done [to show] what needed to be done ... why it wasn't working."

That argument strongly resonates with voters, according to a study of school bond measures by Ron Zimmer, an associate professor of public policy and education at Vanderbilt University's Peabody College. Voters are much more likely to support funding plans that focus on repairs and maintenance instead of new construction, he says. Success is even more likely if school officials can finance the bond by extending existing taxes rather than raising them.

That might explain the success of the \$270 million bond referendum in California's Glendale Unified School District, where officials originally explored a property tax increase to bolster operating expenses and the development of a stronger technical career instructional program. A survey was only half complete before it became clear that public support wasn't there.



Wayland High School's fine arts center.

The district also needed extensive capital improvements, and school officials found much stronger support for facilities renovations and upgrades, says Eva Lueck, chief financial officer. Emphasized during board discussions on renovations were health and safety improvements, repairing walls and roofs, and updating science labs.

Such practical efforts won over voters, she says. "Brick and mortar, you can see. [Renovations] improve property values. You can understand that things have to be repaired and upgraded."

School officials also embraced the same strategies used in Portland and Galesburg—but their public outreach began earlier and ultimately proved more successful. A citizen oversight committee offered assurance to voters that bond money would be wisely spent, and officials widely canvassed the community to talk about the district's plans.

At one point, Lueck reached out to a leader among anti-tax groups, who said, "I don't think you know who you're talking to." Lueck's response: "I do. And if I can convince you this is the right thing to do, I've done a good job." He ended up endorsing the bond plan, she says.

"You must know the people who will normally support a bond proposal, but you also need to be open to those you can bring into the fold," she says.

Another vote-winning tactic, Lueck says, was pointing to taxpayer savings. The bond issue was estimated to eventually save the district nearly \$20 million in future maintenance costs after older facilities and equipment were replaced. The poor economy meant lower bond interest rates—and more money left over for renovations—which also didn't hurt.

Indeed, spending money to save taxpayer dollars is an argument many school leaders are using to win support for bonds, experts say. That might seem counterintuitive, given that a bond issue saddles a community with a multimillion-dollar debt, but voters recognize a good financial deal when they see one.

A common tactic is proposing a bond that piggybacks on a retiring debt. That allows school officials to argue that the



new bond will not raise taxes but simply extend the existing tax rate to cover the cost. Where state money is available, school officials note that matching funds give taxpayers more bang for the buck.

Huber Heights used that tactic a few years ago. Officials noted that, if the community didn't seek matching funds that year, it could be a long time before state money would be available again. Kirby, who oversaw the bond effort, says the district had watched the state distribute money over a period of years without tapping into the funds.

"People needed to understand why this was a good opportunity for the community," he says. "Our message was, 'It's our turn now.'"

### Tactics

Well-crafted messages mean a great deal in bond elections, but there are no guarantees. Indeed, so grim is Arizona's political environment that more than 90 percent of districts say they have no plans to seek a bond issue or a capital override. "In most cases, officials say it's not because they don't need the money, but because they see no prospect of winning voter approval," the *Arizona Republic* reported in May.

The reality is that the success of a bond referendum varies—state by state, locality by locality. Michigan's struggling economy no doubt had some influence on the nearly even split in wins and losses. In California, a change in state law that allows passage of a bond election with a 55 percent margin—as opposed to the two-thirds margin required previously—helped boost the approval rate to 75 percent.

Indeed, bad times actually can encourage people to rally behind their schools. "People have a more pent-up desire to fund schools at a higher level," says Jill Wynns, a San Francisco board member and president of the California School Boards Association. After debilitating cuts in state education spending, and election laws that require a two-thirds approval rating for raising local taxes for operating expenses, voters' "best opportunity to support the schools financially is through bond elections."

Of course, given that a bond vote's success or failure often is by a few percentage points, school leaders must think hard about their electioneering tactics. It's essential to squeeze every "yes" vote out of the community—and deflect the opposition of naysayers and critics.

Yet current tactics vary widely. Some districts run stealth campaigns, targeting get-out-the-vote efforts at likely supporters—teachers and parents—and trying not to draw undue attention from opponents. It's just as helpful when potential "no" voters forget an election is even taking place. Some suggest that yard signs should not be distributed because it reminds opponents of the vote. The job of getting likely Yes voters to the polls is the work of telephone banks and door-to-door volunteers who can target messages.

Ironically, the weak economy has become a bond issue selling point, Marks says. "It can be sold in these economic times

as a job creator. When you build a school, it brings money into the community, not just for [construction workers] but for the cafe down the block, the company that supplies the windows, the company that supplies the toilets. Everyone wins."

Districts rely heavily on community members to lead bond campaigns, and most successful efforts make an aggressive "get the word out" effort. In Missouri's Francis Howell School District, email was used extensively to get information to voters. Meanwhile, the campaign for Michigan's Bloomfield Hills sent letters to senior citizens and past absentee voters in an attempt to sway traditionally less-supportive audiences.

Bloomfield Hills did not have a choice about targeted audiences. The district had attempted several previous bond issues and the entire community was well aware that another vote was coming. But an aggressive effort to get out the district's message appeared to work.

"Our process was: We'll go the extra mile for outreach" to all voters, says Superintendent Robert Glass. "We wanted all of them. We didn't hide this election from anyone in the community or target our message specifically to anyone. Some say you should get just parents to vote, but that wasn't an option for us. We knew we had to get seniors on board, as many as we could."

In the end, the district's \$58.7 million bond issue passed by a comfortable margin.

That won't always work, so Nevada's Clark County Public Schools are taking an unusual tack. Rather than ask voters for a costly bond issue that is unlikely to pass—the district estimates it needs \$5.3 billion in construction and renovation work—school officials are pitching a "pay your way" plan that would raise \$669 million over six years.

The property tax hike would be used to modernize nearly 20 schools, replace aging HVAC systems in others, and include construction for a few elementary schools to ease overcrowding.

"This will provide a gap or bridge between our previous [bond-funded] construction program, which is winding down, and a time when we can go out in a more economically favorable time that will support a true bond program that would meet our comprehensive needs," says district spokeswoman Cynthia Sell. "It gives us an alternative to incurring the debt that comes with bonds."

It's a bold argument, and one that runs counter to prevailing opinion about raising money these days. But as community members—including several former Nevada first ladies—rally behind Clark County's campaign, who can say how it will play out?

The only thing certain these days is that—if a good plan is well argued—voters often will take a financial hit for their schools. But even then, there are no guarantees. ■

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Naomi Dillon

# Seeing Green

**Districts find cost savings when they take steps to conserve energy and make schools more environmentally friendly**

**T**he good news: American households are not the biggest producers of municipal waste. The bad news: We're a close second. Food scraps, packaging, grass clippings, furniture, and appliances all contributed to more than 250 million tons of trash collected in 2010, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

And yet that's nothing compared to the money schools throw down the drain on utility and energy bills through inefficient and careless use. The U.S. Department of Energy estimates school districts waste as much as a third of the \$12 billion they spend annually on energy, which incidentally is the second largest line item in most district budgets, behind payroll.

Thanks (or no thanks) to a prolonged economic downturn, educators are scrutinizing figures that once were considered fixed costs, taking large and small measures to make sure they get the most bang for their buck. In a word, schools are going green.

Old standbys like recycling programs and conservation initiatives remain at the heart of these efforts, but often with a twist and a boost from 21st century tools. Shutting off lights in empty rooms becomes a snap with occupancy sensors. Regulating building temperature is streamlined with automated controls.

Some call it green technology; others call it clean tech-



nology. Still others place it under the banner of high-performance operations, or the even more wide-ranging topic of sustainability.

We won't delve into the differences among these terms, focusing instead on what brings them all together—a recognition and appreciation of the scarcity of natural and financial resources. In short, it's a modern-day version of that iconic slogan: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. And increasingly, educators are heeding that message.

## **Green now front and center**

In July, Maryland officials launched a green schools initiative, allocating \$25 million to the state's school construction fund to help districts perform upgrades and modernization projects designed to reduce their energy consumption. Meanwhile, during April's Earth Week, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo unveiled a massive program that would funnel \$800 million into making state, municipal, and school buildings more energy efficient.

And last spring, the U.S. Department of Education launched the Green Ribbon Schools program, a riff on its Blue Ribbon Schools program. Schools deemed green not only exemplify academic excellence, especially when it comes to teaching environmental literacy, but also operational excellence through sustainability measures and reductions in their carbon footprint.





"This is the moment, the culmination of so many green school movements we've seen over the last couple years," says Anisa Metzger, who leads the school district sustainability program for the U.S. Green Building Council's Center for Green Schools, a Washington, D.C.-based non profit that promotes the use of environmentally friendly building practices and design.

"It's really put a spotlight on the issue and provided some traction," Metzger says. "This is moving from the fringes to front and center."

### From the ground up

In Pennsylvania, energy has been on the front burner recently. Last year, electricity rate caps imposed by a 1996 state law expired, creating more consumer choice as well as the possibility that costs would jump double digits as they did in neighboring Delaware and Maryland.

The prospect of being beholden to the volatility of market rates was enough to convince officials at Red Lion Area School District that they needed to take quick and decisive action.

"We knew we needed to do something to control the future costs," says Terry Robinson, the district's business manager. "We wanted to be good stewards."

Starting with energy costs is certainly a smart move, as it is one of the few budget items that can be trimmed without having an adverse impact on the classroom. In fact, it could

Far left and center: Machias Elementary School in Snohomish, Wash., was a Learning By Design grand prize winner ([www.learningbydesign.biz](http://www.learningbydesign.biz)). The reconstructed school features salvaged elements from the original school. Energy is saved through daylight harvesting and a ground-source heat exchanger.

Above, top and bottom: Gloria Marshall Elementary in Houston won the 2012 Grand Prize for New Construction. At the forefront of the design plans was the desire for a relationship between the school and the environment. The school includes an eco-pond, science garden, and interior tree house.

have the opposite effect.

Consider this: The National Center for Education Statistics reports per-pupil energy expenditures climbed 19 percent from 2007 to 2008, nearly five times the 4 percent U.S. inflation rate during that same period. Had energy costs mirrored the nation's rate of inflation it would have saved districts some \$2 billion—money they could have poured back into the classroom.

With this in mind, Red Lion officials began a conservation journey through Pennsylvania's Department of General Services, which has a program that matches districts with vendors that provide performance contracts. The contracts are a customized set of energy efficiency recommendations that are funded through the savings districts will realize in the future.

All told, Red Lion committed to \$6 million worth of upgrades across the district, replacing the boilers at its two junior high schools, modernizing HVAC systems, and retrofitting all of the lights in the schools and administrative



building, among other things.

"We went as small as putting vending misers on vending machines to installing the geothermal pump system," Robinson says, noting the latter project cost just under \$2 million.

Clearview Elementary School, a 40-year old building that lacked air conditioning and derived its heat entirely from electricity, was selected to receive the system, one of the most cutting-edge sources of renewable energy. Geothermal systems draw power through pipes that snake from wells drilled deeply into the ground.

"Basically, what that means is we're using the groundwater, the consistency in that temperature, to heat and cool the building," Robinson says.

Less than a year after the green makeover, it's still too early to tell in hard numbers how much Red Lion has saved, though initial estimates had pegged the savings at an average of

## **NJSBA program focusing on sustainable schools**

Green schools may be all the rage right now, but not all school districts are giving it the green light—unsure of how to proceed, where to find the money to pay for the projects, and even whether it's all worth it.

Enter the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA), which recently launched a three-year study called the New Jersey Sustainable Schools Project.

Conducted by the nonprofit Educational Information and Resource Center and funded by the Alliance for Competitive Energy Services—a state energy-buying cooperative managed by NJSBA—the study will work with 20 selected school districts to examine whether incorporating energy-efficiency and conservation measures on existing school buildings have an impact on district finances and student achievement.

"The project will be of significant interest in New Jersey, where the average age of public school buildings exceeds 50 years," NJSBA Executive Director Marie Bilik said in a press release. "While green energy has been a component of new schools and the focus of building renovation in some districts, most schools have not been able to pursue the concept."

One reason is because they simply don't know how, which is why the project aims to provide guidance on developing policies, pursuing alternative funding and public-private partnerships, and reinvesting savings in the instructional program, says Bilik.

As part of the project, each participating school will take part in a newly erected Green Schools Leadership Institute. Teams of faculty and board members will develop a "strategic green plan" that includes action steps, lesson plans, and resources.

"In New Jersey and other states that have been hard hit, going green makes sense financially, but also this is clearly where the growth is in the economy," says Frank Belluscio, deputy executive director at the NJSBA. "I think school districts want to do this, but you really need to have the programs there to make them want to do it."

\$300,000 to \$500,000 annually. If public feedback is any indication, however, the building improvements have been worth it.

"We've heard nothing but good things," Robinson says. "The time was right to do something like this."

### **From the top down**

Timing played a key role for the Jordan School District, too. The Utah State Energy Department received \$35 million in federal stimulus dollars to support alternative and renewable energy projects, including the installation of solar panels at all 73 school districts in the state.

And additional monies were available to districts that promised to use it on special-needs populations and as a one-time expense, says Steve Dunham, Jordan's communications manager. The Rivers Edge School fit the bill.

"We'd been looking at ways to incorporate new and green technologies, and we had a population that wasn't being serviced," Dunham says. "So when the money was available from the federal government, we knew we could bump their needs to the top."

Originally housed in a 1920s-era building, Rivers Edge serves about 40 students with severe emotional and behavioral issues.

"It was easily the oldest facility in the district that hadn't been retrofitted," Dunham says.

The \$8 million grant allowed the district to start from scratch. The new 48,000-square-foot building includes features like a geothermal heat pump system, 235 solar panels on the roof, three wind turbines on the south side of the campus, and an automated control system to tie it all together.

The solar panels alone are expected to generate 70,000 kilowatt hours annually, providing about half of the school's power needs. Indeed, the school's first power bill was \$1,800, a fraction of the roughly \$8,000 to \$10,000 it would cost for a school of similar size.

What's more, the school's energy input and output figures are broadcast over the Internet for students, staff and the general public to view.

"They see real-time how much energy those solar and wind turbines were generating and how much we're using," Dunham says. "It's opened up some new doors for teachers, who say they've never seen the students so engaged."

The new building also has opened a new feeling and spirit in the community.

"In the past, [the students] would come to school in this old facility and parents would bring them, and the feeling I think was that nobody cared about them," Dunham says. "Now they have such a sense of pride. Look at this beautiful building. It's really changed a lot of issues we dealt with. We created a new atmosphere and environment." ■

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John J. Cassel

# 21st Century School Boards

**The markers of our new age are 'anywhere, anytime, now.' What will school boards look like after the digital revolution has transformed society?**

**A**merica is in the midst of what some call the "third wave" of the industrial revolution. Just as the mechanization of the textile industry changed England in the late 1700s, and the assembly line transformed America in the early 1900s, so our current digital revolution is poised to change our entire world in ways we cannot yet see.

How shall we think about school boards in our new digital world? Some assume, or perhaps hope, they will fade into obsolescence. Personally, I am committed to public education as the only way to keep the U.S. strong and democratic. We cannot have vital public schools without publicly elected school boards, as school boards serve to link schools and communities in critical ways. It is particularly urgent that school boards find new practices and habits to stay effective and positive.

The U.S. will not continue to be a key player in the global economy if our public school graduates are not up to the new challenges. But schools and their governance structures cannot continue with business as usual. The vitality of our society requires all of those involved with public education to fully participate in the digital transformation.

The markers of our new age include: anywhere, anytime, now. Clearly, the bureaucracies that have been valuable in the past will not work going forward. My concern is with school governance. Part of the governance job is finding ways to help districts become the nimble organizations our new age requires. Board leadership requires board members to understand their own organizational role and the particular type of institutional power they wield.

What will school boards look like on the other side of the digital revolution? Some of our most effective boards are pointing the way.

## **Revolutionary expectations**

A critical, and often neglected, task of every school board is to clearly articulate the mission of the organization. Such clarity is important for staff (what are we trying to do?), students and

families (how do we fit in and can we make this work for us?), and community (why is this work important to us?). If our communities are going to spend a significant amount of resources and money on schools, they need clarity about what we are trying to do and why it is important. If staff and students are to work together, they need a common understanding of the goal.

Clarity of purpose is the age-old responsibility of every board. But, in today's digital world, clarity about, and commitment to, a vision is urgent. School is yet another example of where the individual cannot "go it alone." Quality public education can only arise from a collaborative effort, and it falls to the board to marshal the resources and ensure everyone is on the same page regarding the goals and purpose of education.

Most public school districts are less than clear about their values and purpose. In addition, most districts resist change. The impulse of many new board members and some boards is to "drive change" into resistant organizations. These board members misunderstand the way governance works.

Here is a marker for the digital board: The board sets up the expectations that ensure change will happen. The board, on behalf of the community, is the part of the organization that creates and nurtures an expectation that schools will meet the educational needs of their students. In today's world, this means being part of the revolution. Our old ideas and old outcomes no longer make the grade. The board needs to regularly ask the hard questions: Are we moving closer to the kind of education our new society requires? Are our graduates ready for the challenges they'll find right outside our doors? Have we established, at the heart of our organization, expectations for success? Do we have a culture that supports risk and innovation? How can we help our communities understand the changes and challenges of the new age?



## A 21st century governance team

Collaboration is a mark of our new age. Important things get done when you stir in the right mix of ingredients (perspectives, skills, wisdom, and insight). Being a true governance team has become an increasingly important part of any district's success. Revolutionary boards understand they need a competent and capable superintendent to be successful. And, they structure their relationships with the superintendent and staff to ensure an empowered organization that is able to move toward agreed-upon goals.

Effective governance means a true partnership, where each part of the organization plays its own role. The dynamics of the modern partnership raise an age-old conflict around the role of the board. Board members want to make a contribution; they see the demands on graduates and want to help them be successful. However, the subject many board members know best is management (most are successful people and good managers in their own right). But, even a bi-monthly board meeting is a terrible way to manage a school district. An organization where the board needs to make all of the important decisions will never be nimble.

That is important to note, since successful school districts in the digital world must be nimble. Real evolution and growth are part of staying alive. Our factory-based mental models regarding education limit our thinking. The idea that "next year we'll get it better" retards continuous improvement and revolutionary growth. It's ironic that we have to be concerned that schools function as "learning organizations." Only an organization that can learn from its own experience and implement positive change will be able to model the lifelong learning required by all future graduates.

A modern public school requires empowered staff members who feel they are able to use their professional expertise and stand accountable for the results of their efforts. The only way school boards can empower their staff is to establish expectations and get out of the way.

This is not to imply the board has no role. Agreed-upon expectations are vital. Everyone in the organization needs to be working toward the same thing. And the board orchestrates the agreement. Staff members will invest themselves in expectations if they see their goals and plans are connected to community values and professional wisdom.

Successful boards need to find ways to let go of management and focus on that part of the work boards do well: values, purpose, expectations. The staff must be inspired and empowered to figure out how to put the values and purpose into practice. Only this kind of mutual partnership between board and staff will allow public schools to rise to meet the expectations of the digital revolution.

## The big picture

Teachers, principals, and even at times the superintendent are busy teaching students and managing learning. Who is thinking about our transformed world and the meaning of the

changes? Who is thinking about what an educated citizen will look like 25 or 40 years into the future? Who is thinking about the shape and character of our communities? Who is thinking about what our society's investment in education means? If a small group of committed and informed citizens can gather around these kinds of questions, our whole society—and especially students and their teachers—will profit.

School boards carry an awesome responsibility: the future of our children and our society. However, too many school boards go about their business as usual, ignoring the need to rise to the occasion. The whole enterprise of public education is at risk. What will it mean for school boards to take their responsibility seriously?

How boards spend their time is a key issue. Does it stay focused on the big picture, thus fulfilling its charge and role? Or, does the board spend most of its time on management issues, thus defaulting on its unique challenge?

A notable challenge before school boards is the difficult matter of community trust. Much of our digital revolution has transformed the way we communicate and access information. We know more than we ever did and our knowledge comes from a myriad of sources, 24/7. For school boards, it's tempting to do business online. However, to maintain community trust, the board's work must be transparent. The board is obliged to work exclusively at the board table. Only at the table can the board act as a corporate body and speak with one voice.

Part of the challenge to the school board is finding the discipline to limit its work to the corporate, public setting. The digital revolution, with new and immediate ways to communicate, has made this part of the task more difficult.

The board has a clear obligation to act only as a single governing body (not exercising its power as individuals) and to be disciplined about its agenda, rejecting managerial conversations, and focusing on district ends and gauging success. In this way, the demands of our open meeting laws actually enhance the board's ability to make a positive contribution.

21st century school boards can rise to the challenge of our digital age. They need to allow themselves to be transformed by the revolutionary forces at play in our world. They need to truly partner with an empowered staff. They need to be focused on the big picture and refuse to be sidetracked by old battles and established behavior.

If contemporary school boards can engage the demands of our new digital world and learn to respond, they will model the exact behavior future graduates will need to exhibit for success in our transformed world: the ability to be lifelong learners.

The vitality of our society and the success of our children depend on effective school boards. I believe that the thousands of locally elected school board members want to succeed and will step up to the challenge. ■

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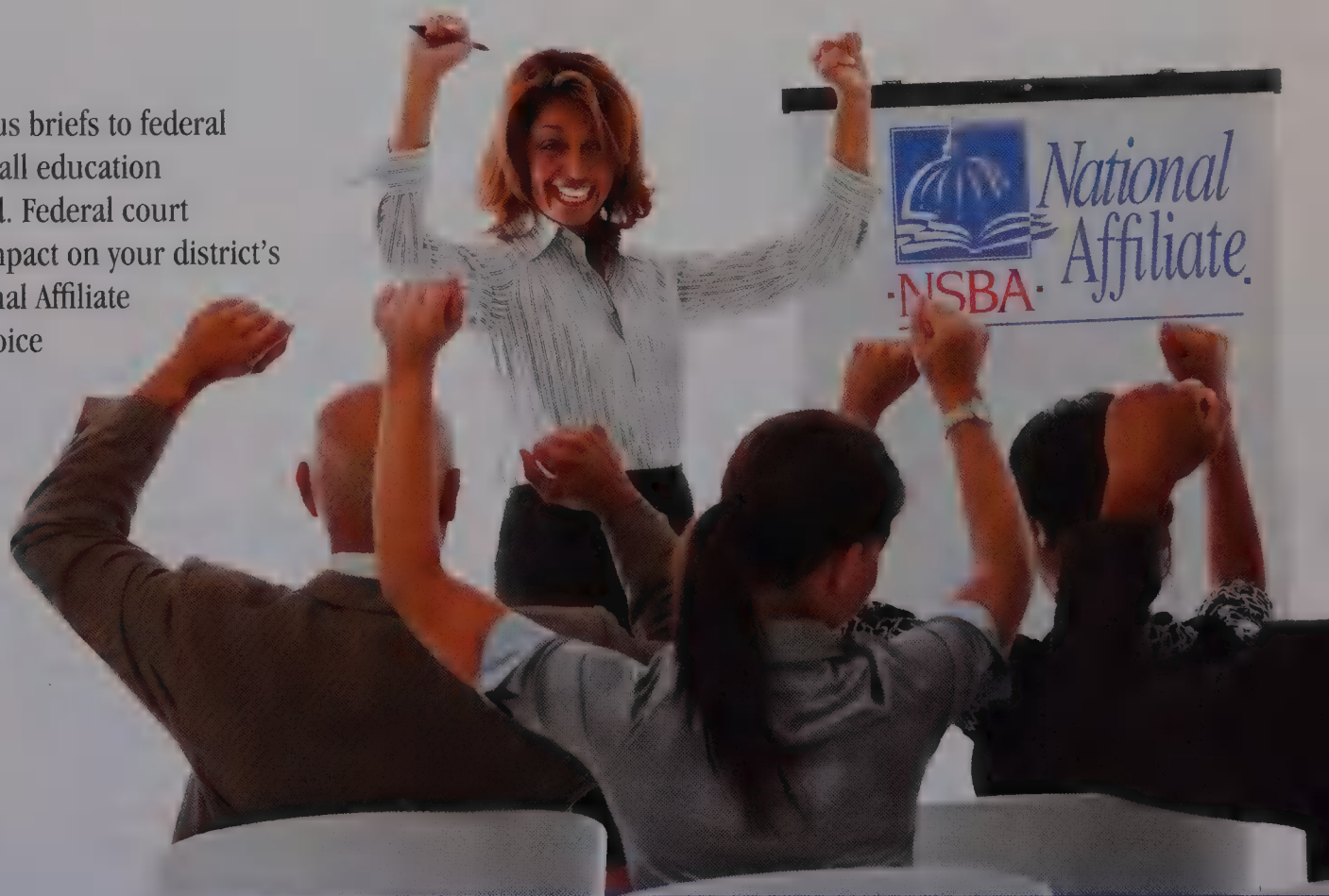
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# Living the Mission

*Is your mission statement an afterthought?  
Take a page from these successful schools whose  
mission statements drive all decisions*

**Michael Corso, Linda Lucey, and Kristine Fox**

**D**o your teachers, students, and community members know the goals your district and schools are striving to achieve? Does everyone in your learning community know your mission statement?

As researchers and professional development providers, we find all too often that school mission statements are merely written documents posted in the main office and published in myriad handbooks. They are not what they should be: a set of beliefs that drive a district's goals, hiring practices, instructional leadership, and program initiatives.

Often, mission statements are irrelevant, or worse, obsolete. Yet, in our work in hundreds of schools we have seen

how creating and maintaining a mission-driven culture propels schools to new levels of excellence.

Through a joint research initiative, two nonprofit organizations, the Aspirations Research Center at the Quaglia Institute for Student Aspirations and the Successful Practice Network, conducted a quantitative and then qualitative study examining highly ranked public high schools across the country. This project was supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in partnership with the Council of Chief State School Officers and the International Center for Leadership in Education.

The schools that rose to the top in our study have mission statements that are widely known within the district and applied to decisions involving every aspect of teaching



and learning.

What the high-achieving public high schools in our study share is evidence of the importance of having a mission that is genuinely and widely shared, lived, and aligned with the school's policies and practices.

### **No excuses: College bound**

Withrow University High School is a public school of choice in Cincinnati, serving an inner-city population with an enrollment that is 98 percent students of color. The school's mission focuses on preparing students for college. At Withrow, "Every student is college bound." This determined approach drives all decisions in the school.

A student survey noted 61 percent of students agreed that "I know the goals my school is working on this year." This response is 24 percent higher than the national average of students in grades six through 12.

When everyone understands the school's mission, all resources of the school system are focused on achieving the mission. Students know what they must do to attend college, teachers teach to a level required at the college level, administrators accept no excuses, and the school board budgets in a way that supports the mission of getting all students to attend college. In 2008, the school had an 85 percent college acceptance rate, with at least 70 percent of students attending.

### **Citizens of the world**

North Carolina's Raleigh Charter School has achieved numerous awards and recognitions. Its mission statement reads: "We graduate citizens of the world by creating an interconnected learning environment that combines a demanding college-preparatory education with a curriculum that teaches and models citizenship skills."

Focusing on citizenship is a different mission statement from getting students into college, yet the end result is an equally successful school. The difference is reflected in the course offerings, class expectations, and a shared set of values to guide decisions. Students at Raleigh Charter live out their mission in the way they treat one another. Citizenship begins at home. In response to the statement, "Students are supportive of each other," 79 percent of Raleigh Charter students agreed.

Another indicator of the school living out its mission is reflected in student responses to the statement, "I believe I can make a difference in the world." Seventy-six percent of students agreed with this statement.

Raleigh Charter's mission statement is active and visible. We found the aspects of school life at Raleigh to be so much a part of the fabric of daily existence that it was challenging for staff and students to articulate how and why Raleigh is the way it is.

### **Know your students**

Saunders Trades and Technical High School is part of the Yonkers City School District, which sits on the urban edge of New York City. Currently, the school serves 1,250 students from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

In 1997-98, Saunders was recognized as a Blue Ribbon National School of Excellence by the U.S. Department of Education and in 2005-06 as a High Performing/Gap Closing School by New York state. Saunders' mission of "valuing relationships and a small learning environment" is evident throughout the school.

Students at Saunders recognize they are part of a special family. They indicate that there are very few instances of bullying and students in general just "get along." During interviews, students were quick to comment on the success of a classmate. It was clear that students and staff care about each other.

The staff and administration at Saunders have internalized their belief about the necessity of building strong relationships with students as the key element to improved student performance. For example, the design of the course of study supports the school's mission. Saunders students each have a major, similar to a college major. Students work with the same group of teachers in their major for three years, leading teachers to genuinely understand the goals of their students.

Perhaps the most telling piece of data from this urban school is a 94 percent attendance rate. Students want to be at school.

### **Advanced Placement focus**

Newport High School in Bellevue, Wash., is known for its emphasis on Advanced Placement (AP) classes. It was selected as a Blue Ribbon National School of Excellence in 2003 by the U.S. Department of Education.

Many schools want their students to feel challenged and motivated to take a rigorous curriculum. What makes Newport High School different? Possibly it is the explicit mission expressed in measurable terms: "All students will take at least one advanced-level course before graduating from high school in preparation for the rigors of college." The students we interviewed repeatedly told us that they were expected to take up to five AP courses before they graduate.

These results are a product of Newport's commitment to its mission. The school schedule includes 30 minutes of small group tutoring at the end of every day. In addition, the school offers peer tutoring and counselors who guide students in their course selection toward the most rigorous curriculum each student can handle.

Teachers are supported to enhance their teaching skills through the Advanced Placement Institute hosted by the



district. Sixty-one percent of Newport High School staff have attended the summer institute, and many of these teachers have attended it multiple times over the past nine years. Newport's school community embraces this culture and strives to create an environment that is challenging, rigorous, and committed to graduating students ready for college-level work.

### Mission-driven schools

Whatever the common cause—whether keeping students in school and valuing relationships as in Saunders, or having students get into a first-choice college as in Newport—purpose itself is an active force in the daily experience of school. Far from the dead documents framed in many principals' offices, the schools we studied have mission statements they *live*.

Withrow's mission statement ends with two words: "No excuses." In many schools, this would make for a nice hallway banner or splashy brochure caption. At Withrow, "No excuses" is on the minds and lips of every student and staff member as they move through their day. It *drives* them. Students at Raleigh Charter School frequently referenced the school's mission statement "to graduate contributing citizens of the world" as accountable for academic success, high levels of participation in co-curricular activities, and as the rationale for their service learning program. Being mission driven is the common thread.

In these schools, an outcome of having a shared and lived sense of purpose is a high degree of systems alignment. Having all participants understand the school's mission statement is one thing. Ensuring that resources, schedules, professional development, student services, curriculum, co-curricular activities, and other school systems are in full support of the school's mission is another.

A significant finding in these high-performing schools is

that all of the oars are in the water and rowing in the same direction. We uncovered little to no evidence of departments or areas working at cross-purposes. Guidance departments and administrators support classroom teachers, who in turn support students toward a common goal. For example, all of Raleigh Charter School's field trips are oriented toward the mission of teaching students to make a contribution to their community and the world. Their curriculum and schedule were direct expressions of the mission-critical importance of having an interconnected learning environment.

Do these findings suggest that the key is a common, unchallenged direction? No. In each school, we did find disagreement about how to achieve the agreed-upon goal. However, each school did hold a common mission. We also found that where the system is lacking in reference to the stated purposes of the school, interventions are promptly put in place to create greater alignment.

In Newport, data suggested that a small minority of students was struggling with the school's mission of high academic achievement due to a lack of personal relationships with teachers. The school is in the process of addressing this concern through professional learning communities and looking for ways to improve relationships with students to better help them excel academically—Newport's stated purpose.

All schools studied have a dynamic sense of their purpose. Having set their sights on a common target, these schools are not content with resting on their laurels. They embody the notion of continuous improvement by frequently re-examining and raising the goals they set for themselves. Examples of this:

- Despite the focus on citizenship and service, several staff members at Raleigh Charter School told us, "We are still learning what citizenship means."

- Saunders' consistent ability to form relationships with students who typically do not do well in school has become the foundation for considering new ways of challenging students academically.

- Now that Withrow has had success in helping students pass the Ohio Graduation Test, it is looking into the ACT and AP programs as the next level of performance assessment.

- Newport's vision of rigor currently has an effective and strong college prep focus, but it continues to pursue innovative programs to exceed college-readiness standards. ■

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## Living out your school's mission

The results of our study led us to conclude that individual mission statements do matter. Through the study of these schools, we learned three simple steps schools can take to get started living their own mission statements.

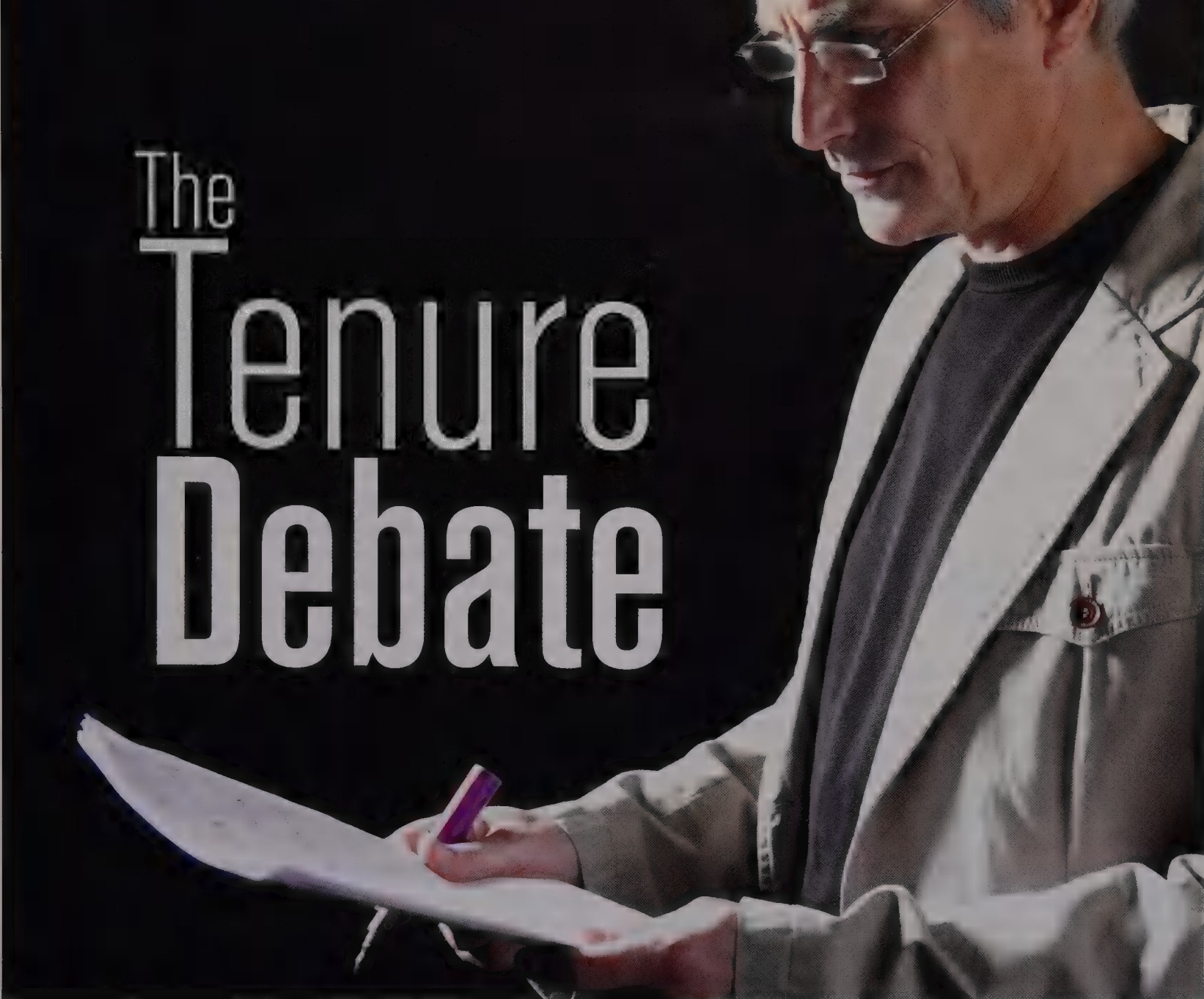
**Step One:** Find out whether all stakeholders know your school and/or district's mission statement.

**Step Two:** Document evidence of the mission statement being lived through the district's actions and goals.

**Step Three:** Take action to align school and district initiatives with the mission statement or commit to rewriting a purposeful, meaningful mission statement.



# The Tenure Debate



Over the past several years, a vast array of politicians, organizations, and individuals have shown grave concern over the academic decline of K-12 education in the U.S. Citing poor achievement compared to our peers internationally, an abysmal graduation rate, and the lack of basic skills among those who do graduate, critics place the blame on ineffective teaching.

Caught in the crosshairs of this debate is teacher tenure. The prevailing line of reasoning is that if tenure were abolished, bad teachers would be supplanted by more effective educators.

Many reformers say education should be handled “like a business.” So how do businesses and other professions attain excellence? The answer is: quality control. Quality control is a multifaceted approach aimed at defect prevention, detection, recall, and correction. The earlier a problem is detected, the cheaper it is to correct the defect, but no matter how

Eliminating protections is a dismissive reaction to ineffective teaching, a professor says

**Craig Waddell**

stringent the quality control process is, some defective products invariably slip into the distribution cycle.

When considering the problem of ineffective teachers, we must begin with the dichotomy of prevention vs. treatment. Manufacturing defects are prevented through quality control and treated through recalls and repairs; diseases are prevented through vaccinations and treated through prescriptions. Both preventions and treatments come in many varieties.

Prevention is almost always preferred over treatment.

Using the prevention vs. treatment dichotomy, let’s dissect the rather nebulous term “bad teachers” into a set of attributes and consider various interventions. And then let’s look at tenure and see whether it should be taken away.

## The types and why of ‘bad’

There are three distinct types of “bad teachers”:

■ **Unqualified individuals:** These teachers are accredited despite lacking sufficient expertise in either their acad-



emic discipline or in didactic practices.

■ **Misplaced teachers:** Qualified teachers placed in subject areas where they lack certification and/or expertise, such as a middle school English teacher assigned to a high school math class. This type of misappropriation is analogous to assigning a pediatrician to care for the elderly. The pediatrician may be quite competent but unqualified as a gerontologist.

■ **Underperforming teachers:** Possessing teaching “skill” but lacking “will,” these teachers are discouraged, disenchanting, disenfranchised, or antiquated. They have compromised their commitment to the profession.

### Potential factors

Why do school districts have these types of teachers? Here are some possible explanations:

■ **Deficient teacher education programs:** To increase revenues, “diploma mills” rush students through superficial degree programs, with assurances of convenient, low-effort course work. At other institutions, the focus has shifted from academic excellence to high graduation rates. Professors are more likely to be censured for failing students than for inflating grades. Colleges may be partially responsible for contaminating the teaching profession with unqualified candidates.

States have enlisted the Educational Testing Service (ETS) to institute PRAXIS testing to ensure prospective teachers are qualified. However, ETS regulations permit candidates who fail the exam to perpetually retest without delay or remediation. This accommodation may allow marginally qualified candidates to eventually squeak through the PRAXIS pass/fail checkpoint.

■ **Not enough teachers:** Some disciplines (such as high school math and science) can’t attract a sufficient number of teachers due to competition from business and industry. Otherwise competent teachers are extracted from their areas of expertise and conscripted into subjects where they lack proficiency. Schools without enough highly qualified applicants may compromise standards to fill vacancies.

■ **Inadequate recruitment practices:** It’s possible that qualified candidates exist, but some districts fail to recruit them. This disconnect may be due to inferior employment practices, understaffing in the human resources department, bad advertising and solicitation of applications, the negative image of some districts, and a failure to properly vet applicants.

■ **“Cherry-picked” assignments:** Teachers, by virtue of their seniority, have some latitude in choosing assignments. Veteran teachers may eschew schools or districts with bad reputations, unpopular principals, demanding parents, or difficult students. A cycle of failure ensues: Junior teachers are relegated to untenable positions, become disillusioned, and migrate as soon as their seniority allows, perpetuating the cycle. Novice teachers relegated to especially

challenging assignments may be labeled as “bad” by virtue of their immaturity, insufficient mentoring, inadequate support, or overwhelming responsibilities.

■ **High turnover rates:** Teaching is a high-energy, high-stress, high-burnout profession with high turnover. For the sake of argument, assume that only 5 percent of replacements are unqualified and will eventually be identified and addressed. Under this scenario, the turnover rate alone would inject an average of 50 additional unqualified teachers into the profession every day.

■ **Bad probationary policy:** At the college and university levels, the probationary period is often six to seven years, and tenure is predicated on professors demonstrating expertise and making tangible contributions to their fields. Tenure often is automatic for K-12 teachers, conditioned solely on surviving a three-to-five-year probationary period. In some cases, probationary teachers face periodic formative and annual summative assessments, but these evaluations often are superficial and conducted by harried administrators.

■ **Lack of administrative follow-up:** After tenure is granted, administrators may feel that it is impractical to remediate or remove a “bad teacher.” Avenues are available for redressing an underperforming tenured employee, but the process may be so unwieldy or protracted that it is impractical. Once tenure is granted, the problem shifts from the teacher having to prove competence to the district having to prove negligence. This becomes a cost-benefit decision, where the costs of addressing the wayward employee outweigh the benefits to the educational environment.

■ **External circumstances:** Occasionally, a formerly qualified teacher becomes derelict due to personal shortcomings or external circumstances. It is naïve to believe that a good teacher can thrive regardless of the work atmosphere. Their sensibilities can be crippled by an overbearing work environment. In this case, the teacher’s subpar performance is the result of a flawed, onerous system.

### Why keep tenure?

Based on these factors, it should be apparent that eliminating teacher tenure would be a woefully inadequate treatment to such a multifaceted problem. We must minimize the influx of unqualified teachers, stem the loss of competent educators, construct a nurturing work environment, and appropriately assign certified personnel.

Some tenure opponents will insist that it seriously impedes the replacement of “bad teachers” and is the root cause of low-performing schools. They believe if tenure is eliminated, low-performing schools would be infused with more effective, competent, experienced teachers.

That is an unfounded conclusion. As long as the avenues into the teaching profession are inadequately structured and monitored, “bad teachers” will infiltrate education. An



experienced, ineffective teacher will be replaced by an inexperienced, untried candidate. We can supplant “bad teachers” and hope that their replacements are superior, but—using Rudolph Giuliani’s words—“Change is not a destination, just as hope is not a strategy.”

Meanwhile, we also need to look at the law of unintended consequences. By eliminating the law that removes the obstacle to firing teachers, you also reduce incentives for teacher loyalty.

Tenure—like it or loathe it—is an employee benefit, similar to salary, vacation, medical benefits, and sick leave. Employees increase their commitment to institutions and organizations as their temporal investment accrues dividends. In education, benefits generally are homogeneous at the state level (retirement plans) or district level (health benefits). With tenure, qualified, philanthropic teachers can invest years of effort into a struggling school, with impunity, in an effort to improve the state of the institution.

When tenure is removed, teachers have little incentive in an individual school or district and perpetually risk termination based on an administrator’s whims and foibles. Why would highly qualified, competent teachers bet their professional career on the chance that they could significantly improve the state of a low-performing school? A modest salary boost is a small consolation if a teacher can’t raise students’ scores and is branded as inept. A minor pay differential, or “combat pay,” is small compensation for working in a highly challenging school when the price of students’ failure to progress—for any reason—is professional *hara-kiri*. Good teachers—smart teachers—will not take this gamble.

If teacher competence is based on student test scores, savvy teachers might migrate to schools where student proficiency already is established. This “bright flight” of high-caliber teachers would result in rookie teachers backfilling job openings in low-performing schools.

A second unintended consequence could be dampening the entrepreneurial spirit. Non-tenured teachers must exercise restraint in questioning administrators’ directives and recommendations for fear of reprisals and possible termination. Once districts can dismiss teachers “at will,” teachers will be reluctant to express considered, professional opinions that deviate from the status quo. Professional learning communities and other teacher-involved process improvement ventures could be seriously diluted by a reluctance to contribute divergent, creative ideas.

Tenured teachers are more likely to invest time and effort in institutions where they perceive an enduring commitment. Like homeowners, tenured faculty labor to enhance the structure of their institution, create long-range investments, engender enduring collegial relationships, and invest in the community. Like renters, transitory teachers focus on expediency over stability, short-term benefits over long-term costs, and career advancement over institutional

improvement. When a district reduces its allegiance to its staff, the faculty reciprocates.

Many districts assign veteran teachers as mentors to new employees. If tenure is abolished, senior teachers may begin to view the new employees as potential threats to their own livelihoods. Teachers across the spectrum may become more restrained in sharing best practices, collaboratively planning, and aiding their peers. Ironically, eliminating teacher tenure could actually reduce the overall quality of teachers.

## II the pendulum shifts

How much collateral damage to the careers of competent teachers is acceptable in the quest to eliminate ineffective teachers?

Tenured teachers’ salaries are generally above average due to their years of service and salary “steps.” Communities must not be lured into severing their obligations to veteran teachers to reduce operating expenses. In an environment where administrators apply subjective assessments of quality, senior teachers could be viewed as a liability based solely on their cost, age, or intractability.

Tenure guarantees veteran teachers due process and protects them from termination without just cause. Ineffective teachers may abuse these safeguards to avoid righteous indictment. However, if tenure were eliminated, converse risks arise. Ineffective or unethical administrators could abuse their discretionary employment powers, severing teachers to cut costs, suppress dissenting views, or expand opportunities for their colleagues.

Eliminating teacher tenure is but one avenue to addressing the problem of ineffective teachers. It is a reactive treatment rather than a proactive prevention. It is a treatment that fails to address the underlying shortcomings in the teacher certification process, flaws that are permitting unqualified candidates to enter the profession in the first place. It disregards the problem of competent teachers being placed in untenable assignments. It ignores the systemic flaws fueling an exodus of qualified professionals.

Our efforts should be directed at recruiting and developing the best educators, stemming the influx of “bad teachers.” Simultaneously, we need to stanch the exodus of competent, experienced educators. Finally, subpar tenured teachers should be remediated, but not through the complete abandonment of a fruitful system.

Amputation is a technique for dealing with infections, vehicle recall is a process for addressing defective brakes, and eliminating tenure is a dismissive reaction to ineffective teaching. None of these approaches is prudent. ■

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## The Value of Evaluations

*How can districts determine which teachers are effective and which are not? Value-added measures are one tool, but they won't suffice on their own*

**"T**eacher of the Year Laid Off" is a shocking headline that raises the question: Why would the best teacher get laid off?

The answer is simple. The recession has forced school districts to significantly cut costs to balance their budgets. In years past school boards could ask, "What could be cut besides teachers?" Now they can only ask which teachers should be laid off.

After years of deferring maintenance

projects, lowering energy costs, reducing the number of extracurricular activities, eliminating central office positions, and implementing other cost-saving measures that did not directly impact the classroom, many districts face no other choice than to lay off teachers to balance ever-shrinking budgets.

And in most districts, the teachers laid off first are those with the least seniority, even those recently named as "Teacher of the Year."

### Keeping effective teachers

Unfortunately, the vast majority of districts can't make layoff decisions based on teacher quality. Many are, of course, bound to "Last In, First Out (LIFO)" rules that require layoffs to be seniority based. Even in districts without LIFO requirements, it still isn't possible to give preference to effective teachers because there is no systematic way to distinguish them from their less-effective peers.

This is important because a 2010 study by the CALDER Institute found that basing layoffs on effectiveness rather than seniority would result in 25 percent fewer teachers being let go. To achieve the same level of savings, districts now have to cut more of their least experienced teachers than they would if more experienced and higher paid, though less effective, teachers were laid off as well.

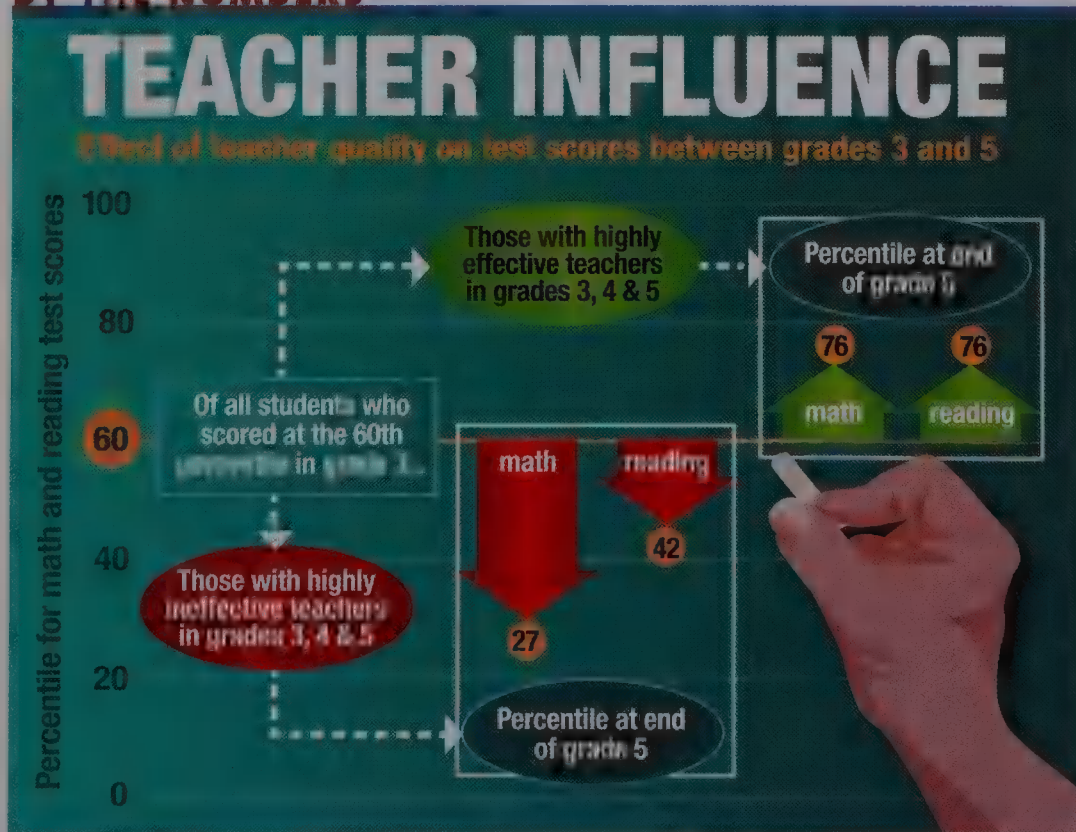
Basing staffing on effectiveness rather than experience would result in smaller class sizes. Furthermore, students more likely would be taught by an effective teacher, which leads to greater increases in student achievement.

The advantages of high-performing teachers to students extend beyond school and continue well after they graduate. A 2011 study conducted by Harvard and Columbia University economists found that having just one highly effective teacher:

- Increases the likelihood a student will go on to college.
- Decreases the chances a student will get pregnant as a teenager.
- Would result in higher lifetime earnings for a student.

How can districts determine which teachers are effective and which are not? According to a 2009 report by the New Teachers Project, 99 percent of teachers are rated simply as "satisfactory" on their evaluations. Common sense tells us that 99 percent of teachers are not "satisfactory."

### BY THE NUMBERS



SOURCE: Center for Public Education



Researchers, like the CALDER study authors, use a statistical measure called “value added” that measures the impact a teacher has on the change in their students’ test scores over the year while accounting for the students’ prior achievement and other characteristics. At least in theory, value added is used to isolate the impact a teacher has on students’ achievement. So, for example, teachers of gifted students are measured against other teachers of gifted students. Special education teachers are compared against other teachers of special education students.

### Using value-added measures

Using value-added measures alone to determine teacher effectiveness is appropriate for theoretical purposes, as in the CALDER report. But to accurately evaluate individual teachers for practical purposes, such as determining which teachers get laid off or identifying those who need professional development, value-added scores alone would not suffice.

Even though value-added scores are one of the most objective measures of teacher effectiveness, they are not perfect. As I discuss in more detail in the Center for Public Education’s report, *Building a Better Evaluation System*, every value-added score contains some amount of “statistical error” or “statistical noise” that may identify truly effective teachers as ineffective due to statistical limitations.

However, these limitations should not prevent the inclusion of value-added

scores as part of a comprehensive teacher evaluation system that includes other measures of teacher effectiveness as well. This is because, although not perfect, value-added scores correlate with other measures of teacher effectiveness. Such correlation provides evidence that a change in a teacher’s value-added score reflects a change in a teacher’s actual effectiveness. For example:

- Principals can informally identify which teachers have the largest impact on student achievement.
- Teachers who use stronger instructional practices tend to have higher value-added scores.
- Teachers who are rated highly by their students tend to have higher value-added scores.

If your school board is looking to use value-added scores to evaluate teachers, here are techniques that can be used to provide a more complete picture of teacher quality:

- **Include multiple years of teacher data.** For example, averaging a teacher’s value-added score over multiple years decreases the chances of misidentifying an effective teacher as ineffective, and vice versa.
- **Include more student data.** Including more information about student achievement when calculating the value-added score, such as test scores in all subjects, can also reduce the chances of misidentifying teachers.
- **Use multiple measures.** Do not rely on value-added scores alone to evalu-


ate teachers. Other measures such as classroom observations, lesson plan reviews, teacher portfolios, and parent/student surveys are some tools districts can use to more accurately evaluate their teachers. Value-added scores typically account for between 25 and 50 percent of a teacher’s overall evaluation score.

A comprehensive teacher evaluation system that includes value-added scores along with other measures of teacher performance provides a powerful tool for districts, and not just for high-stakes personnel decisions like deciding which teachers to lay off or how much teachers are paid. Value-added scores can be extremely helpful for the continuous improvement of all teachers.

Evaluation systems should be designed to provide useful feedback to all teachers on what their strengths and weaknesses are so they can use that information to improve their instruction, no matter if they were rated as highly effective or ineffective.

Yes, value-added scores can help districts avoid laying off their “Teacher of the Year,” but the real power of comprehensive evaluation systems is to improve the effectiveness of *all teachers*, and thereby improve student achievement for all students within the district. ■

Jim Hull (jhull@nsba.org) is senior policy analyst at NSBA’s Center for Public Education (CPE). The full reports cited in this article can be found on the CPE’s website: [www.centerforpubliceducation.org](http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org).






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## How Should You Build It?

*Districts can choose one of three delivery systems for their construction projects. Each comes with benefits and risks that you should carefully review before making a decision*

**P**ublic contracting law has long required school districts to award construction contracts based on competitive bidding, known as the “design-bid-build” project delivery method. However, in recent years most states have passed laws permitting alternative project delivery systems.

The project delivery system defines the legal and contractual relationships and the roles and responsibilities among all parties involved—the owner/school district, the design team, and the contractor. It also establishes the sequence of activities required to build a facility.

School districts commonly use three types of project delivery systems for public construction projects. Here are some of the benefits and risks of each.

### Design-bid-build

The traditional “design-bid-build” method describes the sequence of work and the relationship between the parties involved in the project. The owner undertakes and completes each of the three phases prior to starting the next. The architect agrees to design the project in an agreement with the owner.

After the design is complete, general contractors submit competitive bids stating the price for building the project in conformance with the design drawings and specifications. The district awards the job to the contractor with the lowest bid price. In the “build” phase, the general contractor performs all of the work necessary to construct the project.

During construction, the architect’s

contract typically includes responsibilities to serve as the owner’s representative. The architect monitors the contractor’s work to verify that it is building the project in accordance with the plans and specifications.

A key advantage of this system is that it discourages favoritism, fraud, and collusion in spending public funds while stimulating price competition. Because the architect designs the project to meet the owner’s requirements, the owner has significant control over the end product.

The system also has downsides. It takes longer—from the start of design to the end of construction—than the alternative project delivery methods because the architect must complete the entire design prior to bidding out the work. Designers also have limited knowledge of the true cost and scheduling ramifications of their decisions. As a result, bids may come in higher than budgeted, requiring redesign that compromises the desired final product.

The owner is responsible to the contractor for cost and time lost in correcting design errors. Under laws governing architect liability, the owner has only limited ability to recover those costs from the design firm.

To minimize disputes and change orders, districts should consider investing extra resources in design at the front end of the project. Once drawings and specifications are 100 percent complete, the owner engages specialists with design and construction expertise to determine the “constructability.” The specialists identify design problems so the architect can correct them prior to putting the project out for bids. This





extends the design phase, but it can help minimize the risk of expensive time extensions and change orders during the project's construction phase.

### **Design-build**

A "design-build" project involves a single contract between the owner and a developer. The owner establishes design parameters, performance criteria, and other project requirements. A design firm and a construction firm join forces and work together to present a proposal as a single entity that would work as a development team.

This approach gives the designer and the contractor an opportunity to collaborate during the design process. As a result, the contractor can identify problems, solutions, and suggestions for improvements that can lead to efficiencies and cost savings during construction.

Since the developer is responsible for both the design and construction, this method eliminates change order proposals based on alleged design errors. You also can "fast-track" design and construction. For example, the contractor can start grading the site and work on foundations while the architect completes the design. Studies have found an average of 14 percent savings in time for design-build projects compared to that for design-bid-build.

However, this method eliminates traditional checks and balances. The designer is no longer the owner's advocate. The architect's loyalty is with the contractor. As part of the development team, the architect's financial self-interest is in cutting costs where possible, potentially at the expense of construction quality or elimination of design-elements that meet program requirements. The owner has less control over the project's final design.

"Bridging" is a hybrid design-build system that addresses some of these concerns. This method involves two design teams. The owner hires the first

architect to prepare its "design criteria" package, which is a partially completed design with specific requirements for the developer to complete. Developers then submit competitive, sealed proposals that detail how they will complete the design, how they will coordinate the work of their design and construction team members, and their qualifications, experience, and proposed price. The district can engage the design firm that created the criteria package to serve as the owner's representative in monitoring the developer's subsequent work.

### **Construction Manager at Risk**

Under the Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) project delivery system, the district hires a general contractor to play two roles during the life of the project. The CMAR first gives pre-construction input as a professional expert during the design phase, providing the architect with constructability reviews, value-engineering suggestions (design changes that save money), building cost estimates, and other related recommendations. At this point, the CMAR is not at risk for the project costs.

As the design matures, the CMAR transitions to the role of general contractor and negotiates a guaranteed maximum price (GMP) for construction. Typically based on the partially completed design, the GMP includes the estimated cost for the remaining design features, overhead, profit, and a contingency fund. If the owner and CMAR agree on the price and construction schedule, they enter into a contract. The CMAR becomes "at risk" for completing the job under the agreed-upon price and schedule.

The contract requires the CMAR to competitively bid portions of the work performed by subcontractors. If the competitively bid subcontractor pricing comes in lower than provided in the GMP calculation, the owner and the CMAR share the savings.

CMAR has several advantages. The owner can choose to fast-track early components of construction before design is complete. For example, once the structural drawings are finished, the CMAR can order the structural steel while the architect completes other parts of the design. It allows for innovation and contractor recommendations during the design phase, but the owner retains more control in comparison to a design-build. With a guaranteed maximum price, you have an opportunity for shared savings and an incentive for the CMAR to control costs and work within budget limitations.

Like the other systems, the CMAR also has disadvantages. Unlike the design-build system, the owner remains liable for errors and omissions in the plans and specifications. Using a price cap may lead to disputes over the completed design and any necessary contract changes.

Also, with the incentive savings clause, the CMAR will receive payments that exceed the low bids of subcontractors. That amount would not go into the general contractor's pocket on a design-bid-build project.

Understanding these systems can help a district better select the project delivery system most suited for its specific facility goals. Although architects and contractors will have valid opinions and preferences regarding delivery systems, it is important to confer with your school construction attorney regarding the legal relationship between the contracting parties and the risks and liabilities associated with the choice of project delivery system. Regardless of which system you choose, you should use contracts drafted by your school construction attorney that comply with applicable state law and protect the public interest. ■

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## An Ongoing Campaign

*Passing a bond referendum is a huge accomplishment, but it's just the first step. You must keep voters updated on your progress and how the money is being spent*

**W**hen school boards win voter support for capital needs, it's tempting to breathe a collective sigh of relief and move on to other pressing issues. It's important to remember, however, that the real public information campaign is just beginning.

Bond supporters, employees, elected officials, real estate agents, business leaders, and other key publics will want assurances throughout the building program that taxpayer dollars are being spent wisely, and that district leaders are keeping the promises they made during the information campaign.

Since perception often varies widely from reality, keeping everyone informed about what was promised,

what was voted on, and how the money is being spent is not simple. Memory is famously unreliable, which means that even ardent and active supporters may have very different ideas about priorities, budgets, design specifications, proposed school locations, and other details.

A universal truth most districts face is that everyone is convinced someone else's school is getting more than they are, and that someone else's needs are less urgent than theirs. Not surprisingly, given this context, routine changes that seem minor or simply normal business to construction management professionals may seem like major gaffes and broken promises to others. This is true even when trust is high among parents, the public, and school officials, and there is a great deal of congruence between and among various groups about priorities, goals, and expectations.

If trust is lacking, the push-pull tensions between a group's original vision and the unexpected situations that occur when digging mammoth holes in the ground and managing multi-million dollar renovation projects can quickly escalate out of control.

When trust is broken, or perceived to be broken with previous bond projects, school officials will have to work even harder to regain lost ground—even if that ground was lost due to the actions of school boards and superintendents who are no longer in office.

### Address the basics

As with any relationship, trust is built on shared goals and shared experiences, as well as the ongoing dialogue and the frequent flow of open, honest, and transparent communication. It's vital to address these basic issues to keep your bond program front and center in the years and months ahead.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

■ **Develop a school bond or capital improvement campaign specifically geared toward each key audience.** Don't use a one-size-fits-all approach to messaging; tailor your communications in a way that lines up with their interests. Teachers, for example, want to know when and how long their room, hallway, or building will be a construction zone, and what kind of help they will get when they have to pack and move cherished lesson plans, displays, and instructional tools.

Parents care most about the impact of your plans on their child or children, and will get concerned quickly if their teachers and principals don't seem engaged in the process or don't know what's going on, when, and why. This means some of the most important school bond/capital improvement communications are internal in nature, and rest in the hands of the facilities team that must keep everyone updated on a daily and weekly





basis. If communication isn't this group's strong point, you may want to temporarily assign a staff member to hound the team for information and distribute it regularly to all parties involved.

■ **Make building and facility issues newsworthy.** As much as people say they want more information about bond projects, the reality is that replacing boilers, repairing windows, and formal groundbreakings are boring for many. Identifying angles to bring these important stories to life takes time, talent, and a nose for news. When in doubt, tell the story through people. Show the joy on your students' and teachers' faces when they enter a brand-new building for the first time. Those photo opportunities are made-for-TV moments.

Ask principals and teachers to talk about how they're using the new equipment to foster better student learning, or how the new facility makes planning between and among teachers and departments easier and more effective. To maximize news coverage, let the cameras in when tractors start moving lots of dirt, teachers come into classrooms the first time, or when the new furniture or computers are being taken off the truck and into the building. The public relations team is only as good as the information provided to it. If someone in facilities isn't tasked with keeping it in the loop, the team can't get the media there to cover it.

■ **Keep broadening the net.** Just as active, engaged volunteers and frequent communication with "yes" voters make or break bond information campaigns prior to the vote, how you keep various groups involved and engaged in the decision-making process often makes or breaks public perception regarding the wise use of taxpayer dollars. With trust in government at a low tide nationally, and taxpayer angst high due to economic concerns, even the most frugal school

officials have some ground to make up simply due to negative media spillover onto elected officials and government workers.

■ **Remember whom the program is for and adjust plans and guidelines as needed.** While most districts have educational specifications and building guidelines, school teams need flexibility to make sure what gets ordered is what they need and want most.

Consistency matters from a district standpoint, and having guidelines is important. We just need to remember that they are guidelines, and guidelines—like budgets—can be changed. With more states adopting the Common Core standards and technology advancing faster than schools can adapt, most standards will need to be updated.

If your media center standards still require rows of expensive shelving units, hardcover books, and lots of tables and chairs rather than e-readers, online library subscriptions, and comfy furniture for informal gatherings and study groups, you may want to rethink them.

Long gaps can exist between voter approval and finished product, so it's important to keep everyone—and every detail—up-to-date. No one wants a new school to open that's five years behind the curve.

During massive, multi-facility construction and renovation projects, stories about furniture, technology, and equipment getting ordered that principals and teachers don't want or need just because it was on someone's list in central office. Getting principals, teachers, parents, and others involved in building advisory teams helps ameliorate these concerns, and keeps everyone informed and on track.

■ **Set clear communication goals.** Having clear, measurable goals helps drive more effective communications. In Guilford County Schools, where I work, our goal is to place a least one story a week related to our \$457 million

school bond program—either in the news or through a district communications channel.

This simple goal was aggressive, yet achievable, and created the necessary sense of urgency. We didn't hit every week, but we greatly increased the volume of facility, construction, maintenance, and renovation news, information, and stories flowing within the district and in news reports.

The facilities team also gives a brief report on progress at all school board meetings, which are televised on the district's cable channel. The report is posted as part of the minutes, and sent out as part of the board meeting highlights.

Setting up systems for regular communication helps embed the plan into standard operating procedures for the district and board. This ensures that communication moves from an idea to a reality.

■ **Frequency matters.** Typically, a strategy that focuses on daily and weekly messaging across a variety of communication platforms (social media, Web, e-newsletters, email, publicity, community presentations, etc.) will work better and more effectively than periodic or random blasts.

Saving all the great stories to create a 20-minute video or multipage newsletter doesn't work in today's fast-moving and highly mobile environment. The idea is to communicate less information more often, and to do so in a simple, clean, clear, and compelling fashion.

Engaging others in key decision-making processes and healthy doses of frequent communication may not solve every public relations challenge that arises, but does go a long way toward maintaining public support. Conducting an ongoing information campaign also lays important groundwork for future capital improvements that will require voter approval. ■

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## Retreat to Move Forward

*When you hire a new superintendent, holding an intensive, focused daylong meeting with the board and top administrators can set you on the right path*

**S.** Dallas Dance, the new superintendent of Maryland's Baltimore County Public Schools, is one of the youngest CEOs of a large district in the U.S. At age 31, he is tasked with running a system that has 105,000 students, 17,000 employees, and a \$1.5 billion budget.

Dance started July 1, but several weeks before he came on board, board President Lawrence E. Schmidt approached him about holding an intensive daylong retreat to ensure a close and productive board-superintendent working relationship. This "strategic work session," which was held on July 14 and involved the board, Dance, and his executive team, was considered an unqualified success.

"I couldn't have been happier at what we accomplished in only a day together," Dance says. "Not only did the event energize participants, we also generated a mountain of really practical ideas for building a rock-solid board-superintendent partnership that could withstand the inevitable stresses and strains at the top of a huge, complex educational enterprise. And we even went on to identify several ways to strengthen the board's governing capacity."

I recently talked at length with Schmidt and Dance about what they felt made the session such a winner. In

their eyes, five key elements emerged.

### 1. A meticulous design process

Involving four of the board's 12 members in designing the session was critical, both said, because it gave credibility to the process and built board ownership. The design process also benefitted from the board members' experience and expertise.

"The last thing we wanted to do," Schmidt says, "was just bring in an outside facilitator who would take us through his or her boilerplate retreat 'package.'" I was retained to help plan and facilitate the session. I interviewed the members one-on-one via telephone. Then, in a long teleconference, the committee worked out all of the important details, which included:

- Determining the session's objectives, including, for example, "to identify and explore opportunities to strengthen board governing capacity through improvements in the board's governing structure and processes."

- Establishing the session's structure. The committee decided to use six breakout groups led by board members to generate content and ensure active participation.

- Fleshing out the blow-by-blow agenda.

A seven-page session description was sent out in advance to all partici-

pants. The committee members were listed by name, signaling that the day would be the very opposite of a "canned" or slipshod event. Everyone involved knew well in advance that the day would be worth their time and energy.

"Some of my executives were a bit skeptical at first, since they'd been through a few disappointing retreats," Dance says, "but when they saw the detailed description, they realized that July 14 wouldn't be 'same old, same old.'"

### 2. Strong board leadership

In interviews with the design committee, several board members said they felt "led by the nose" all too often by the previous administration. They also said they were fed up with what they considered too many "show and tell" board meetings.

Strong board leadership was built into the July 14 session, principally by creating the six breakout groups led by board members. Three groups met concurrently in each of two rounds over the course of the day together.

The three groups in the first round focused on the board-superintendent partnership, for example, identifying superintendent "CEO-specific" leadership targets in the areas of internal educational leadership and management and external relations. The second-round groups examined facets of the board's governing work, including identifying governing performance targets and guidelines for working together.

"Getting several board members involved in leading—indeed, co-facilitating—the July 14 session," Schmidt



says, “further strengthened board ownership of the session, but we had to make sure every one of our breakout group leaders succeeded in the role.”

I was asked to develop a set of breakout group leader guidelines. For example, the guidelines noted that the leaders’ primary role was to encourage active participation of breakout group members. Orientation teleconferences were held for the leaders a week before the session.

**3. Executive team involvement**

The committee that designed the strategic work session concurred that all of the superintendent’s senior executives should be present and actively participate in the event.

“There were three really compelling reasons to include all of my executive team members as active participants,” Dance says. “One, our breakout group deliberations would benefit from their in-depth knowledge and technical expertise. Two, their participation would break down board-staff barriers and help us meld together as a more cohesive ‘strategic governing team’ for the district. And three, they’d be much better prepared to carry the ball in implementing recommendations coming out of the retreat.”

**4. Clear follow-through plan**

From the start, it was made clear that action would be taken down the pike. The work session description sent in advance to the board and the administrative team outlined the follow-through process.

“We wanted everyone to know that all the time and energy they’d be putting into the July 14 work session would generate concrete results, and all the good ideas and questions that came out of the session wouldn’t be written in sand,” Schmidt says.

Before arriving at the meeting room, all participants knew that the breakout group flip chart sheets would be transcribed at district headquarters, that I

would write a follow-through action report, and that the committee that designed the work session would review the report and present it to the full board.

**5. Professional facilitation**

The district, knowing the complexities facing Baltimore County and the stakes involved, recognized that professional facilitation was also part of the equation. That’s one reason they opted to hire a consultant to assist in designing and facilitating the session.

“Pulling together the board and senior executives of the 26th-largest school district in the country was, by definition, a high-stakes affair,” Dance says, “and we had to make sure the ses-

sion wasn’t just well-designed, but that it was also really capably facilitated.”

Districts that embark on this type of process should consider these five keys to holding a successful retreat, whether you hire someone from the private sector to facilitate or work with your state school boards association. Doing so can help build bridges between your board and your superintendent, and they can make a significant contribution to the long-term success of your students. ■

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## Show Me the Money

*Challenged by financial pressures on all sides, districts are taking innovative steps to cut costs in the ongoing search for savings. And in many cases, it's working*

**I**n 1996, Tom Cruise starred in the box office hit, "Jerry McGuire." A successful sports agent, Jerry questions the unethical behavior of his firm and strikes out on his own.

A prospective client, attempting to negotiate a better contract, demands that Jerry scream "Show me the money!" again and again. Jerry acquires new insights, applies his talent, and ultimately succeeds.

During the recession, school board

members have demanded that state legislators, administrators, and grant writers show them the money so urgently needed to support education. Again and again, boards are challenged by declining property values, rising tax rates, unfunded mandates, lower sales tax receipts, tax caps, ballooning pension costs, and declining state and federal aid.

Financial pressures have wreaked havoc with school budgets. Nevertheless, boards and administrators around the country demonstrated dedication, resourcefulness, and creativity. They identified new strategies to cut costs and generate new funding to protect their district's mission.

Let's take a look at several innovative programs that may inspire your board to continue the search for savings.

### Rx for savings

In December 2010, Florida's Pasco County school board introduced the Care Here

program to provide medical services to employees, retirees, and eligible dependents. Three clinics located close to schools provide services such as primary care, diagnostic testing, and dispensing medications. Employees have no out-of-pocket expenses.

Participants benefit because they have timely access to health care at convenient locations. Providing medication and regular medical attention for chronic conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure improves physical well-being. Better health leads to fewer emergency room visits and hospitalizations, which reduces the insurance company's expenses. In turn, the district's medical insurance premiums are reduced.

Because employee sick time is lessened, fewer substitute teachers are needed, further cutting costs. In the first year, the district's medical expenses dropped 4 percent, saving \$2 million. They expect even better results next year.

### A big turnoff

Pennsylvania's Central Dauphine School District saved more than \$1 million over the past two years by hiring an energy conservation contractor. The company is making a significant difference in consumption by instituting a program that encourages custodians, teachers, and students to be more aware of conserving energy. Lights and computers are now turned off when not in use. Facility managers shut down heating and cooling systems when they aren't needed.

The program provides both education and reinforcement of energy-wise behaviors in the schools. When the





four-year contract expires, the district will continue to save by following conservation strategies. The company is providing free support as long as energy-saving tactics are employed.

California's Carlsbad Central School District also has experienced success with a similar conservation program, netting \$550,000. During the last two years, excess funds originally allocated to the utility budget have been used to cover classroom expenses.

Energy performance contracts can help districts reduce long-term utility costs without capital outlays for new equipment. Savings accrued by hiring an energy conservation contractor can be used to install modern, efficient equipment such as boilers, water heaters, air handlers, and remote-controlled thermostats and lighting.

A new boiler, for example, will reduce emissions and maintain optimum temperatures by utilizing computer-controlled radiators and air handlers. Such equipment helps raise or lower temperature settings to legal limits, further enhancing energy conservation. Similarly, new fixtures will provide better lighting while lowering electricity consumption.

Some contracts stipulate that district payments to the energy performance contractor be limited to current costs for the agreement's duration. The contractor guarantees energy savings, which means the expense of installing new equipment is recouped by reducing energy usage and creating a profit margin. If the contractor fails to generate the agreed-upon savings, the district is paid the difference between what was guaranteed and what was actually saved. When the contract ends, the equipment remains the district's property.

Many states require that districts have an energy performance contract reviewed by the state education department before the project can be approved. As with any contract, be sure to have your attorney carefully

review the terms and conditions before signing.

### **Adding income**

While controversial, some districts sell advertising space to generate cash. In Texas, the Humble Independent School District sold naming rights to the football stadium entryway and press box. The district also sells ad space on school buses to professional sports teams and local businesses.

Districts sometimes use consulting firms to find a match with advertisers and handle graphic design work. Ads can be placed on textbooks, scoreboards, monitors, and websites as well as in and on buses. As a safeguard, districts usually maintain control of advertising content, but finding appropriate companies is neither easy nor cheap. Firms brokering these transactions may earn up to 50 percent of ad revenue.

Of course, advertising is not for every community. Critics express concern regarding the psychological and educational impact ads may have on students. Moreover, some districts discontinue advertising because they can't consistently generate expected income.

### **Bus pooling**

Savvy districts scrutinize transportation costs when searching for savings. Periodic reviews of bus routes can identify unnecessary expenditures of time and fuel. Using routing software, districts can consolidate bus stops and develop alternative routes as student requirements change.

Creative transportation managers in New York's Orange and Westchester counties join with neighboring districts to reduce transportation expenses by sharing bus runs. Sometimes they split a trip, with one district driving one way and the other providing the return trip. This is especially effective when transporting children to special programs outside the district. By pooling resources, districts can consolidate or

even eliminate bus runs, saving hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Monitoring fuel consumption also produces big savings. Computerized systems use electronically coded keys paired with each vehicle. A computer monitors the mileage of each vehicle as well as its fuel consumption. If a bus begins to use excessive fuel, it can be taken out of service quickly to remedy the problem.

### **Super savers**

Chicago Public Schools reportedly saved more than \$40 million by hiring a specialized procurement officer from the private sector. Since arriving in March, the officer has worked to change past practices, resulting in cost reductions and improved productivity.

Milk suppliers have seen their delivery schedules cut from daily to every other day. Meanwhile, classrooms are being cleaned more cost effectively by night crews.

The district is saving \$11.5 million by using market research to evaluate vendor pricing and renegotiate new fees where appropriate. Another \$20 million in savings will be realized as contracts for transportation, utilities, food services, supplies, and construction projects are reviewed. Various e-mail services are being consolidated, saving another \$11 million by using only one provider.

School boards around the country are using creative strategies to fund educational programs. Take time to brainstorm cost-saving strategies with your administrative team. You may be able to direct more district resources to educational programs and show taxpayers their money is wisely spent. ■

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Charles K. Trainor, an *ASBJ* contributing editor, is a certified fraud examiner and certified internal auditor. He is president of Management Audit Consultants, Inc. ([www.mgmtaudit.com](http://www.mgmtaudit.com)) and served for 21 years on a school board in New York state.



## ADVISER

# What Would You Do If ...

## Your community was reluctant to pass a bond issue?

A school district was going through a very tough bond issue campaign. The district badly needed to rebuild and repair several school buildings, but the community continually voted down the bond issues. The school board had always been fiscally responsible and frugal—so frugal, in fact, that the community was not accustomed to being asked for additional money, and didn't want to pay higher taxes even when shown how necessary it was to borrow the money for construction. What should the board do?

■ I would like to consider what the board's role is in relation to the referendum committee (a group of citizens

who would be actively campaigning). How active should board members be in that committee? What is the committee's role in addressing the concerns of the community? Know your state's laws regarding school board and district involvement in the campaigns and ballot initiatives. Your state may strictly regulate the involvement of administrators and staff and use of taxpayer dollars in a campaign. An effective citizen's committee also will assist the board in connecting with the community. Successful campaigns are built over time—a continual message that builds trust within the community. Effective boards (and the schools they govern) continually share their story. They also listen closely to the community—for the values and expectations related to their schools. In this case, perhaps your community can assist the board in drilling down to the real issues related to this referendum. What does the community expect regarding buildings and the tax dollars used to fund them?

*Dean Langdon, Director of Field Services, Illinois Association of School Boards*

■ The board needs to consider community relations an integral part of the plan of action for the referendum; not a byproduct. The board should start by

accurately describing how the buildings currently do or do not support instruction and student achievement. Clearly articulate how renovating outdated schools will help support the district's goals. Hold open houses and invite community members to come in and see the conditions of the schools. Find your biggest detractors and spend time getting them involved with the planning process. Bring in real estate agents to talk about how older, decaying buildings hurt the property values of homes in the community. Find key community leaders and get them involved in the project. The schools are a community asset, and the entire community needs to understand the reasons for upgrading schools. Lastly, capitalize on the reputation the board has garnered by its careful stewardship of the community schools. Your community acknowledges the work you've done to keep costs down. Now it's time to remind them that sometimes investing is the right thing to do. Go on the road; visit local community groups such as Rotary and Lions—church groups and senior centers. Above all else, don't feel the need to apologize for doing what is necessary.

*Nicholas D. Caruso Jr., Senior Staff Associate for Field Services and Technology, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education*

**Advice for the asking:** Adviser does not represent official policy of the National School Boards Association, nor should it be construed as legal advice.





## REPORTS

# From depression to caring for sick children

### Depression and teenage girls [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

The chances that a girl will experience a major depressive episode increase as she moves through adolescence, and triple between the ages of 12 and 15—from 5.1 percent to 15.2 percent. A new report from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *Depression Triples Between the Ages of 12 and 15 Among Adolescent Girls*, also says that 1.4 million girls ages 12 to 17 (12 percent, on average) experience a major depressive episode each year. This rate is three times the rate for teenage boys (4.5 percent).

### Girls on relationships [www.thenationalcampaign.org](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org)

Four out of five high school senior girls surveyed for “Girl Talk,” a new study from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy and *Seventeen* magazine, say there is pressure in high school to be sexually experienced. Sixty-five percent of the 1,200 girls surveyed had already had sex; 19 percent of these reported having four or more partners. Only half of the sexually active survey responders had used a condom at last intercourse. Forty-three percent had experienced at least one pregnancy scare. The teen girls defined happiness in a sexual relationship as being with someone they love and not going farther than they want to go.

### Immigrant families <http://fcd-us.org>

A study from the Foundation for Child Development, *Children in Immigrant Families: Essential to America's Future*, says that 95.4 percent of children living with immigrant parents are living with parents who are still learning English. Dual language learners are less proficient in reading and math at

the third-grade level than their cohorts; children who cannot read proficiently by fourth grade are four times more likely to drop out of school than their peers.

### Income and race gaps persist <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>

The 2012 edition of The Annie E. Casey Foundation's *KIDS COUNT Data Book* says that, while high school graduation rates and national reading and math scores for all American students are higher than ever, there are still wide gaps in educational achievement by race and especially by income. The report also says that, while mortality rates for all children have fallen and rates of health insurance coverage for children have also improved, the rate of childhood obesity has tripled since the 1980s.

### Poverty and anxiety [www.springerlink.com](http://www.springerlink.com)

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)—muscle tension, excessive worry, concentration difficulties, fatigue, and irritability—is frequently diagnosed among those who live in poverty. Childhood experiences of low socioeconomic status and maltreatment have been shown to lead to the onset of GAD. A study appearing in the *Child Adolescent Social Work Journal*—“Is It Generalized Anxiety Disorder or Poverty?”—concludes that high-poverty mothers have physical needs that are not being met, and that this is what produces their anxiety, not GAD.

### Tobacco use decline slows [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

Four thousand American kids try their first cigarette every day, according to a study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Current Tobacco Use Among Middle and High*

*School Students—United States, 2011*. The report says that, while tobacco usage among youth is still declining overall, the decline has slowed dramatically, and that cigar usage among high school males is rising. Cigars can be manufactured in a size similar to cigarettes and packaged and smoked the same way, but because they are taxed at a lower rate than cigarettes, their price is lower.

### Violent videos and sleep <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org>

A study of 565 Seattle-area 3- to 5-year-olds shows a causal link between violent videos and other age-inappropriate media and sleep disturbances among preschoolers, particularly with trouble falling asleep (38 percent). The children in the study whose parents were given information on age-appropriate media and encouraged to watch media with them had significantly fewer sleep problems than those in the control group. The study, “The Impact of a Healthy Media Use Intervention on Sleep in Preschool Children,” was published in *Pediatrics*.

### Who stays home with sick kids? [www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu](http://www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu)

A report from the Carsey Institute, *Who Cares for the Sick Kids?*, says that 52 percent of parents do not have at least five sick days per year to care for sick children. Thirty-four percent of parents did not even have this amount of time in personal sick leave. Lower-earning parents had the least access to sick leave. When mothers and fathers both have sick leave available, more mothers (75 percent) than fathers (40 percent) stay home with sick children. ■

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Compiled by Margaret Suslick, ASBJ's Editorial Assistant.



## Giving the 'extra' creates a path to excellence

**A**s I get ready to “graduate” to the next stage of life, I have begun to reflect on my 16-year term as executive director and all the accomplishments and challenges NSBA, our state associations, and public schools have seen.

NSBA continues to be the most powerful organization we can be to represent our state associations, the more than 90,000 school board members, and their public school students.

In my first NSBA event, the 1996 President's Retreat, the 50 state presidents sharpened our continuing focus on student achievement. We knew student learning was our ultimate goal, and it's driven everything we've done since, including these examples:

- NSBA launched the *Key Work of School Boards* guidebook in 1999, updated in 2009, which has helped improve the governance of thousands of school boards.

- In 2006, we launched the Center for Public Education, which provides research and analyses on topics important to school boards. We launched data-driven governance training through Data First in 2009.

- And more recently, we partnered with our state associations to bring districts programs that will save money (Buy Board and USBAflex) and use student data accountability systems (Performance Matters and APQC).

These programs are tools but the end game is transforming public education to better prepare current and future students for a radically changed world.

In his latest book, *That Used to Be Us*, Thomas Friedman argues that as a nation we are losing our way. With pretty compelling data, Friedman states that “being average is over.” We cannot afford to be average as a country if we want to return to greatness, nor can our students suc-

ceed if they are average. We must be the “extra” for them and for our nation.

Friedman dwells on the concept of “average” because he feels it is a core problem related to our nation's slide. He shows international data rankings with the U.S. in the middle or at the lower end. We know this country's education system has in fact *improved* in recent decades, but other countries have moved faster, more aggressively and have caught or surpassed us in many areas.

Nevertheless, Friedman believes we can survive and thrive. (You'll have to read the book to find out how!)

I believe the future is bright—if we make it so. It is bright *if* we come together to promote school board governance leading education reform.

To do so, NSBA and the state associations must show the power of our nation's 13,600 school boards. We must provide governance training and development, and a community engagement strategy where the public hears, sees, and feels how school boards are working to raise student learning and school success. Our advocacy in the courts, on Capitol Hill, and in state legislatures must strengthen public education—make it more locally accountable and transparent. Our vision includes community values, determined at the local level, and core, research-based elements. These elements include a pre-K-12 curricula that emphasizes reading, writing, science, mathematics, the liberal arts, project- and problem-based learning, and is loaded with 21st century content and skills. We need teachers who care, are highly competent in their field, and passionate about improving their pedagogy. We need strong administrators who foster a climate of learning. Students must be prepared to continue their edu-

cation with vocational training or college.

We want customization—reaching each student at *their* level—as well as a clear set of high expectations that *all* will succeed. The common core standards may give us that ability.

Transforming public education—that is the end goal. And the good news is that many schools are on their way.

Author Daniel Pink speaks of what motivates students and employees, noting the “carrot-and-stick approach” for rewards and penalties is antiquated and we must find new ways to inspire. Students become more engaged when there is a problem to be solved, a project to be undertaken. Meaningful, purposeful work that links activities to a set of math facts or science concepts brings energy. The result? Learning soars.

We need to instill project-based learning. It takes more planning time and is harder to implement, but the payoffs are real. Imagine groups of students solving a real science problem or a community issue, designing a better playground, a more efficient trash pickup, or a homeless shelter. Technology is a critical tool.

These ideas and the strategies you employ as school board members are key to transforming public education. And the end game is an engaged student learning the content and skills needed for success.

We must create a school board movement with big ideas, a set of messages, and thousands of voices. We are poised to do this work. NSBA is ready to work with you. It is the only way we can make this country great.

We are more than above average. We are the “extra.” ■

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# If You Purchased Municipal Derivative Transactions from January 1, 1992 to August 18, 2011

## You Could Get a Payment for a Class Action Settlement.

A proposed Settlement has been reached with JPMorgan Chase & Co., J.P. Morgan Securities, Inc. (n/k/a J.P. Morgan Securities LLC) and Bear Stearns & Co. (n/k/a J.P. Morgan Securities LLC) (collectively, "JPMorgan"), defendants in a class action lawsuit that alleges price-fixing in the sale of municipal derivatives transactions by JPMorgan and other companies. The case, *In re Municipal Derivatives Antitrust Litigation*, MDL No. 1950, No. 08-02516, is pending in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York.

### Who Is Included in the Settlement?

This Settlement includes all state, local and municipal government entities, independent government agencies, quasi-government, non-profit and private entities that purchased:

- (1) Municipal derivative transactions through negotiation, competitive bidding or auction, from any Alleged Provider Defendant or Co-Conspirator or brokered by any Alleged Broker Defendant or Co-Conspirator,
- (2) Any time from January 1, 1992 through August 18, 2011 in the United States and its territories or for delivery in the United States and its territories.

The Defendants and Co-Conspirators are listed in the detailed notice available on the Settlement website.

### What Does the Settlement Provide?

JPMorgan agreed to a settlement amount of \$44.575 million to be paid as follows: \$24 million has already been paid into an escrow account and up to \$20.575 million will be paid later. This Settlement is only a partial settlement of the lawsuit because it only affects the claims against JPMorgan. The lawsuit is continuing against other Defendants. Morgan Stanley and Wells Fargo have already settled. JPMorgan will provide reasonable cooperation, including discovery cooperation, to Class Plaintiffs' Counsel in the litigation that will continue against the other Defendants.

### What Do I Do Now?

- **Remain in the Settlement.** To remain in the Settlement Class and participate in the Settlement, you do not have to do anything now. If the Court approves the Settlement, you give up the right to sue JPMorgan for the claims and issues in this case. The Settlement Agreement, specifically Paragraph 1(ee), which is available at [www.MunicipalDerivativesSettlement.com](http://www.MunicipalDerivativesSettlement.com), describes in more detail the legal claims that you give up if you stay in the Class. Claim forms are not available now. Register

on the Settlement website to receive a claim form when it becomes available. If you remain in the Settlement Class, you still have the right to exclude yourself from any other settlements with other defendants reached in this lawsuit.

- **Exclude yourself from the Settlement.** If you do not want to remain in the Settlement Class, you must exclude yourself. You must send a written request for exclusion by first-class mail, **postmarked no later than October 19, 2012** to the Settlement Administrator. The detailed notice available on the Settlement website describes the information you are required to include in your request for exclusion. If you exclude yourself, you cannot participate in the Settlement, but you retain your right to sue JPMorgan on your own for the claims in this lawsuit.
- **Object or Comment on the Settlement.** If you remain in the Settlement Class and want to object to or comment on the JPMorgan Settlement or any part of it, you must file an objection with the Court and deliver a copy to Class Counsel and JPMorgan **no later than October 9, 2012**.

### When Will the Court Decide Whether to Approve the Settlement?

The Court has scheduled a hearing on December 14, 2012, at 2:00 p.m. at the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, United States Courthouse, 500 Pearl Street, New York, NY 10007, to consider whether to finally approve the JPMorgan Settlement as fair, reasonable and adequate, whether to approve Class Counsel's request for reimbursement of litigation expenses, and to consider any objections.

The Court has appointed the law firms of Hausfeld LLP; Boies, Schiller & Flexner LLP; and Susman Godfrey L.L.P. to serve as Class Counsel and represent all Class Members. If you want to be represented by your own lawyer, you may hire one at your own expense. You or your lawyer may ask to appear and speak at the hearing but are not required to. If you want to be heard by the Court, you must file a written notice of your intention to appear with the Court and deliver a copy to the Class Counsel and JPMorgan **no later than October 9, 2012**. The Court may change the time and date of the hearing. Any change will be posted on the Settlement website.

### Get More Information

For more information on this lawsuit, your rights, or to obtain a list of defendants, call or visit the Settlement website listed below or write to Municipal Derivatives Settlement, c/o Rust Consulting, Inc., PO Box 2500, Faribault, MN 55021-9500.



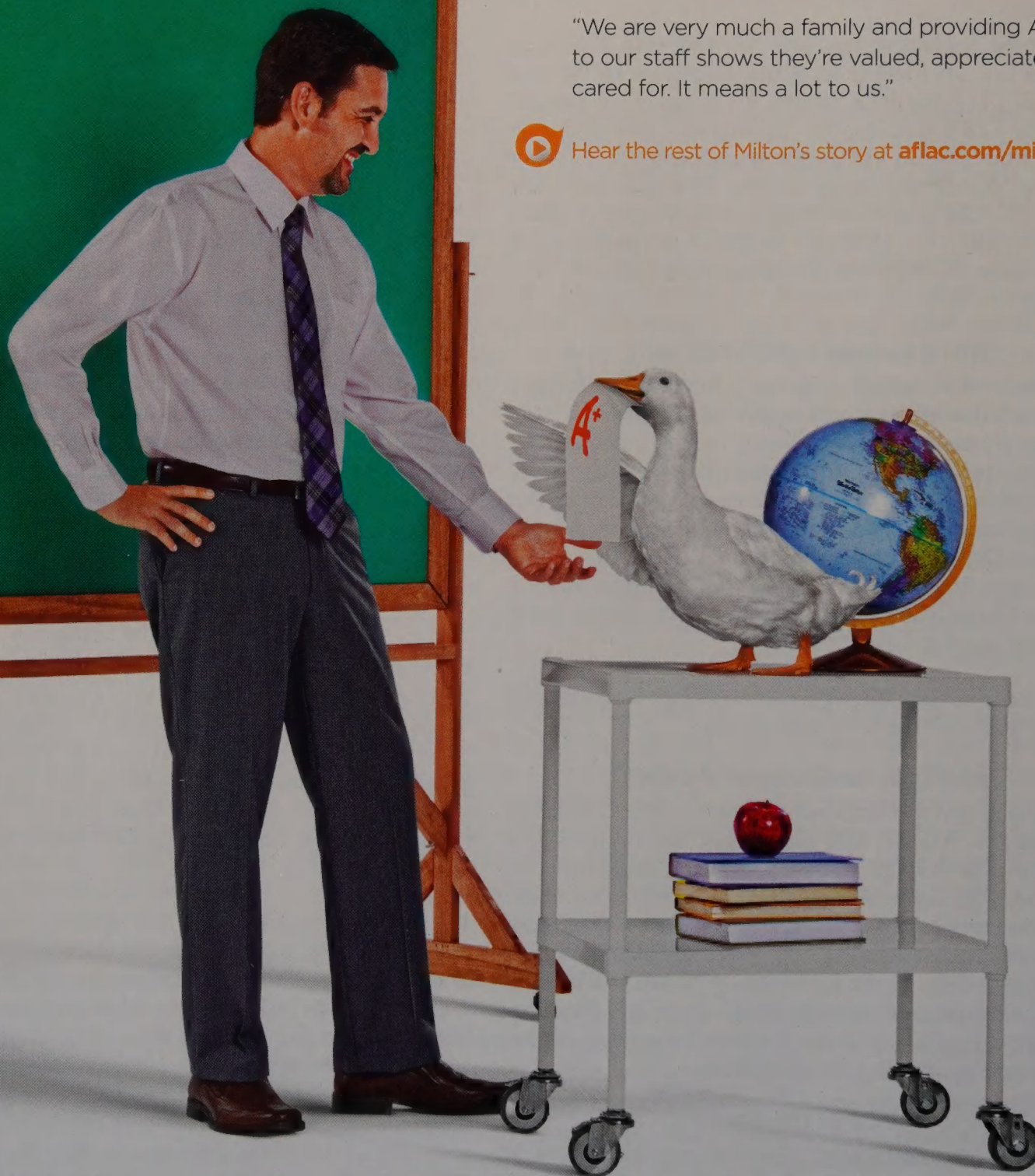
# In this school, employee protection gets straight A's.

"Being able to offer Aflac – at no cost to us – while giving our staff peace of mind and confidence really makes a difference. It's a no-brainer."

"We are very much a family and providing Aflac to our staff shows they're valued, appreciated and cared for. It means a lot to us."



Hear the rest of Milton's story at [aflac.com/milton](http://aflac.com/milton)



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Individual coverage underwritten and offered by American Family Life Assurance Company of Columbus. In New York, individual coverage underwritten and offered by American Family Life Assurance Company of New York. Some policies may be available as group policies. Group coverage underwritten and offered by Continental American Insurance Company. Policies may not be available in all states. Aflac pays cash benefits directly to the insured, unless assigned. There may be indirect administrative or other costs to the employer. Individual's travel expenses for securing this testimonial were paid by Aflac.

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